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Secret

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EDITOR’S COMMENTS

Trick. This year’s *NOMAD* theme lends itself willingly to no small number of double entendres, puns, and associations. It is a playful yet generative theme, one that provided a variety of opportunities for not only frolic but also sober contemplation throughout the speaker series that ran in concert with the *NOMAD* programming. To name a few highlights, our speaker series featured visits from a sneaky noir fiction writer (Jon Segura), a nearly fanatical expert in subversive graffiti and street art (Brian Knowles), and an experimental musician and digital performance artist (Tender Forever/Melanie Valera). Against this backdrop of spirited, artful and sometimes crafty scholarship, our undergraduate writers formed their outstanding essays. I can, utterly without any sort of foxy calculation, declare my sincere pride in the ten essays that were selected for this edition of *NOMAD*.

As they delved in to such thorny topics as apocalypse, clairvoyance, and social control, our writers demonstrated their serious literary clout as well as their creative wiles. So impressed was the editorial board by the caliber of this year’s essays that we decided to recognize five of them as *NOMAD* Prize for Excellence in Scholarship winners, which ranged from the first place prize to three honorable mention recipients.

Many thanks are once again in order to the crew of tricksters who made this year’s edition possible. I owe a debt of gratitude to Sunayani Bhattacharya and Mona Tougas, the wonderful and supremely dedicated mentorship coordinators who organized this year’s mentors and mentees throughout the year. I’m deeply

grateful to Sharon Kaplan, who not only served as a mentor this year but who again worked to make our partnership with the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art a reality through their generous sponsorship of our undergraduate conference. Dr. Lisa Freinkel's vision not only for *NOMAD* but also for the Comparative Literature Department in general has always been remarkable in its force and scope, and I am very thankful for her compassionate leadership. Finally no edition of *NOMAD* would be complete without superlative thanks to Cynthia Stockwell, who does more for *NOMAD* and for Comparative Literature at Oregon than anyone could possibly imagine.

AMANDA CORNWALL

AMANDA STEINVALL

NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:

First Place Winner

Amanda Steinvall is a junior in Philosophy, whose interests include law, art history, and science fiction. Outside university, she can be found skiing or experimenting in the kitchen.

Mentor: **Yvonne Yoeffer**

BOUND TO TRAGEDY:

SECRECY'S MOVEMENT IN *TRISTAN AND ISOLDE*

Of humanity's history of shared stories, the plot of *Tristan and Isolde*, the French medieval narrative that has circulated through multiple forms of art and literature, provokes universal reflections upon the tragedy of secrecy. Though its authorship origins are unknown, the plot or multiple interpretations of the piece remain widely unchanged, which suggests that there is universal resonance throughout the cultures who retell the story.

Tristan and Isolde presents the story of two lovers fated to separation. Knowing that Isolde's status as the wife to Tristan's friend would never allow them to be publicly together, the couple establishes a secret relationship, which ultimately turns tragic with the discovery of their affair and their subsequent deaths. Aristotle's *Poetics* presents tragedy as "a representation of an action...of a certain magnitude... [that arouses] pity and fear effecting the *katharsis* of such emotions" (Neill 492). Thus tragedy is an experience in which the character(s) experience a series of negative emotions and actions, and from these negative experiences have a realization of their own misfortune. Tragedy also compels an audience to confront their own emotions and engage in a purging, which uproots these damaging, negative emotions and presents them for examination.

Using Richard Wagner's operatic version of *Tristan and Isolde* as my main example on how secrecy is expressed tangibly through tragedy in the story, I find that the piece exemplifies how themes of tragedy are intertwined with secrecy. The tragic functions as a dramatic tool, and ultimately necessitates a form of expenditure, or perhaps a sacrifice. Expenditure, in the case of secrecy, would be the forfeit of the secret's hidden-ness, thus its exposure. Also, in the case of this tragedy, I shall refer to expenditure as the physical or internal movement from the characters' initial situation to their surrendering of their freedom from secrecy toward the end of the opera. In addition, the notion of secrecy I shall frame my argument around is concealment, or hidden-ness. Hidden-ness, thus, is something being actively held away from recognition and discovery. While the tragic teems both with secrets and with expenditure, tragic-secrets become facets, and fixations, of both the this lore and operatic plots. Music, specifically opera, becomes a formal foundation of the expression of

human experience, and from that, an exemplification of the tragic-secret. Within the story of *Tristan und Isolde*, the instigation through the dissolution of the lovers' hidden relationship is inherent to the larger movement of tragedy. This secret is exemplified through their affair; without their secret, there could be no movement of the tragic through the plot. During the initiation and dissolution of Tristan and Isolde's affair, the movement of their secret relationship from conception to public discovery demonstrates an irreducible link between secrecy and the expression of tragedy.

Before delving into the movement of the tragic-secret within *Tristan und Isolde*, I shall address the fable and the operatic plot of at hand. As mentioned earlier, the piece, as a 12th century fable, predates many prevalent romantic pieces such as Thomas Malory's 15th century *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and is speculatively the template for it. In the popular version of the original fable, Tristan kidnaps Isolde, and brings her to his friend and employer, King Mark, as a bride. However, in the course of the capture, Tristan and Isolde ingest a love potion and find themselves compelled to start an affair, though Isolde still marries Mark. Though they appear to start their affair not of their own volition but under an enchantment, at some point in the many interpretations of Tristan and Isolde, the potion wanes and the lovers are faced with the decision to continue their secret adultery and worry about discovery, or to stop their actions and remain undiscovered. In each version of the fable, though they are presented in different ways, the lovers continue their affair and attempt to overcome many obstacles and threats of exposure. Their secret is saturated with the tragedy of their situation, as adulterers always on the cusp of being found. Nearly all versions end in the expenditure of the lovers' lives, as well as the discovery of their secret

by Isolde's husband, King Mark.

Wagner's operatic version of *Tristan und Isolde* escalates the construction of the lovers' tragic-secret. Though the plot remains, at its core, unchanged, Wagner highlights the lovers' secret relationship at the focal point and single moving factor in the entire story, unlike the delicate interworking of many characters' relationships and interactions, as well as the political turmoil, that are presented in the medieval fable. The opera, famously lengthy, introduces the lovers' first extensive interaction as mistakenly drinking a love potion. They imbibe this when Isolde offers Tristan a drink, attempting to poison him; the poison, however, is a love potion. In both the Wagner and fable's plots, the lovers construct their secret relationship outside the realm of responsibility; by taking a love potion, their actions and attractions are seemingly not their own. However, in accordance with the notion of tragedy, these characters are shrouded in an ignorance of their actions, and must undergo a terrible change to discover their true situation. Wagner's version follows the change, as King Mark discovers Tristan and Isolde. In the wake of this dreadful discovery of the secret, Tristan and Isolde sacrifice their social standings and safety to reunite. In their hasty return to each other, their exposure becomes all the more tragic when, as they die with the fear and misery of their discovery, they realize that the discoverers of their secret come not to kill them, but to unite them. In the end of Wagner's opera, the discovery of Tristan and Isolde's secret comes at the tragic price of their lives.

Something concealed, a secret, is inherently tied to its discovery, because without something to be *unveiled*, nothing could be *shrouded* in a secret. The secret is also something useful, in that it is employed as a means to an end. Philosopher Georges Bataille deems

such a function of usefulness as "principles...[situated] beyond utility and pleasure" (Bataille 116). This notion of use, as something functioning as a means to an end, transcends the trivialization of something like a secret. The function of usefulness permeates a secret; a secret is useful only when it is undiscovered. Yet, in its concealment, a secret is simultaneously undetected. Therefore, a secret fulfills its utility precisely when it is hidden, and also in its destruction as it is revealed, as it is found out. Additionally, hidden-ness used with dramatic intent, such as in a tragic literary or operatic work, goes beyond pragmatic use and is constructed as a device of expression. Thus, the unveiling of a secret in tragedy becomes a means of story telling, of musical gesture, and of expression.

Wagner's *Tristan* presents secrecy as something bound to not only the plot but also the music of the opera, and ultimately to the expression of concealment. The build-up of the secret, the foundation of the secret, begins early in the plot, in which Tristan and Isolde forge their secret attachment and agreement. In examining the opera,

Wagner's own version stripped the epic's story to its essentials...adding his own interpretation (and details)—all in order to tell in powerful, elemental terms the tale of the Irish princess brought to Cornwall as the unwilling bride of King Mark by Tristan, the man who is not only the King's nephew and messenger, but also the one with whom [Isolde] has already fallen deeply in love—despite all odds (Hutcheon 48).

Wagner remolded the medieval plot, keeping the characters, their secret, and their tragic end, and wove it into a set of musical movements. His music, his opera, breathes life into the movement of growth of Tristan and Isolde's hidden-ness and their tragedy.

Through these initial musical themes of dark chromatic notes and high reaching harmonies whose resolutions are just out of reach, which Wagner presents, the tragic-secret is made apparent. In addition, motifs of building horror and the concealment of a devastating fact, namely the secret of Tristan and Isolde's affair, can be heard throughout the opera. Wagner's expression of hidden-ness and the tragedy of discovery is felt and heard throughout his use of musical pace, and movement from an innocent introduction of simple chords to a conclusion incorporating the whole orchestra. His movement from the single chords to the involvement of the entire orchestra demonstrates the movement from a space in which only Tristan and Isolde know of their relationship, to a moment where the entire public discovers it.

With Wagner's use of opera as the vehicle for his interpretation of the *Tristan and Isolde* plot, music becomes the main tangible facet and foundation for expression of the tragic-secret. Speaking generally on music and its correlation with feeling, Eduard Hanslick claims "Feelings are the content which music represents" (8). Wagner's *Tristan*, I think, introduces aspects of the plot and notions of concealment through musical dynamics that a pure reading of the text could not do. Music exudes specific feelings insofar as it has content that provides a broad-spectrum yet precise feeling. Hanslick asserts, musical "dynamic can appear as readily gentle as stormy, as readily joyful as sorrowful, and yet still be love" (9). Music constructs the basis, the walls and roof, for feeling and recalling aspects of an emotion. Establishing a specific feeling also finds its foundation in formal facets of music, composure, as well as contextualization. Hanslick claims, and I agree, such technical workings of "changes in strength, motion, and proportion...include our ideas of increas-

ing and diminishing, acceleration and deceleration," and so on (10). Therefore, music reflects our perception of how we feel when we have certain emotions. If a piece is played fast and heavy, perhaps with dissonance, it sounds angry; the feeling is communicable and is transferred to the listener. Such musical ideas are explained as "the ingredient which music has in common with emotional states and which it is able to shape creatively in a thousand shades and contrasts" established through "tonally moving forms" (Hanslick 11; 29). I suggest that Wagner's opera exemplifies Hanslick's notion very well, providing dark, consistent musical themes, and a selection of notes from which the sound of concealment and tragedy of the lovers' relationship forms.

A revisiting the of movement of the lovers' tragic-secret permeates the prelude, in which Wagner arranges his musical intentions. In the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, the escalation of the music climbs to high notes in anticipation of the lovers' optimism and consummation. However, this musical climb topples into despair, even horror; one can taste the tragedy of lovers' optimism shattered, through the quickly falling notes, as the music conveys the darker motif of the overall opera. Within the prelude, "Wagner is true to his announced theme... 'desire forever born anew, thirsting, languishing'...after the climax, the 'heart sinks back...into a renewed yearning' until he notes a 'final wilting,' 'drooping...of desire followed by the thought of a transcendent death" (Dreyfus 104). In addition, this description of the prelude aptly reflects the movement of the secret within tragedy. Secrecy, in the opera, translates as a movement of the tragic which transcends a single genre, as well as a single form of expression. The movement of the secret from conception, to action, to unveiling—that is to say the simultaneous destruction and

upholding of the secret—is an irreducible aspect of the movement of tragedy.

Intertwined with tragedy, a form of loss grows as a part of the tragic-secret's function. Secrecy as a tragic notion, situated between concealment and discovery, constructs “symbolic expenditure...[a] major form, [in] literature and theater...[which] provoke[s] dread and horror through symbolic representations of tragic loss (degradation or death)” (Bataille 120). Thus symbolic expenditure is an aspect of tragedy, in which the characters turn to sacrifice of themselves and their secret. This sacrifice is both physical and internal; when Tristan and Isolde surrender their secret, they surrender their lives. Thus, the tragic-secret contains a notion of expenditure; of opening and closing, of exposure as both a dissolution and definition that necessitates precisely what a secret is. The tragic-secret necessitates a movement of loss in which there is expenditure, and/or a form of sacrifice. Sacrifice, in terms of the tragic-secret, shall be defined as something which catalyzes expenditure as a means to protect and/or expose a secret. Secrecy clings to a notion of expenditure; within a secret there is already a form of sacrifice. There is a sacrifice of exposure, for the secret, because its very function is to remain unexposed. The tragic-secret consists of a “state of loss, [and] can be considered synonymous with expenditure; it in fact signifies, in the most precise way, creation by means of loss,” thus this “meaning is...close to that of *sacrifice*” (Bataille 120). Expanding Bataille's argument, I suggest his notion of creation through loss is inherent to the secret in *Tristan*, because discovery for Tristan and Isolde creates their tragedy.

There must be a peak in the tragic-secret in which it is swollen and saturated with want, or threat, of discovery. With this peak,

as with the music, such a point necessitates an unraveling, a deflation. Wagner's use of musical subtleties lend to a poignant means of the expression of secrecy through opera and, more broadly, through music. The movement of the tragic-secret within *Tristan* is marked by a “rising four-note chromatic motive (often called Desire) that occurs at the beginning of the opera...‘a kind of chromatic moan... whose cruel effect is reinforced by long suspensions which appear in place of proper harmonic resolutions’” (Dreyfus 101). Such chromatic expression, unresolved and enduring constant build up, reflects both Tristan and Isolde's growing secret and threat of exposure.

For Tristan and Isolde, their secret clings to not only their tragic movement, but also to their death as a finalized release and realization of their secret. The secret, prone to discovery, makes its final and most crucial movement in its dissolution. The “death” of the secret is a finalization of its definition as such. Thus, the final movement of the tragic-secret finds itself constructed in “their shared conviction that in death alone...leads them to pledge to die together in ecstatic bliss” (Hutcheon 48). The third movement of the tragic-secret consists of transcendence parallel to loss. Such transcendence founded in Tristan and Isolde's deaths are situated in the climax, the release, of the secret. As an experience of the tragic, “to witness onstage the deaths of Tristan and Isolde is not to mourn them, but rather to experience ‘a higher, much more overpowering joy’...an aesthetic pleasure that is the very (re-) definition of the tragic” (Hutcheon 70). This redefinition of the tragic comes at the price of exposing their secret. This exposure of their hidden-ness sparks the loss of their own concealment, and the gain of their final tragic movement. Their final transcendence, their bodily sacrifices,

lend their tragic-secret a conclusion.

Examining closer the tragic-secret themes in the plot and music of *Tristan und Isolde*, I find Wagner's intentions with secrecy in the piece go beyond the mere structuring of a compelling plot. I argue that Wagner, through his musical arrangements, suggests a beating, overwhelmingly inherent bond of humanity with secrecy. He presents a subtle and concrete beginning, an explosive peak, and a final, sobering period of dissolution, throughout the entirety of the opera. Notably, the end song, "Liebestod," "Love-Death," in which Isolde sings of her deceased lover before she too dies, Isolde sings happily of Tristan, describing him as if he were alive. I demonstrate that Wagner suggests, through Isolde's aria, a transcendent release when man is fully exposed and no longer possesses any hiddenness. The final lyrics of the song, "In the billowing torrent, / in the resonating sound, / in the wafting Universe of the World-breath / drown, / be engulfed / unconscious / supreme delight!" Isolde is making her final observation, her final reconciliation with life and death (Wagner). She is completely rid of all concealment; she, like Tristan, now embodies an already discovered secret. Following the movement of tragedy, she comes to a point of catharsis, of purging her secrecy.

In the destruction of their secret, through expenditure of its concealment, and of the death of the secret-keepers Tristan and Isolde, the secret is exposed as such. Thus the final tragic movement in the opera, as well as the dissolution of a secret, redefines their prior descriptors, and engages with transcendence beyond the tangible world. They work together in a final satisfaction of each other. As Bataille asserts,

In the coming of death, there appears a structure of the me

that is entirely different... This specific structure of the me is also distinct from the moments of personal existence, locked away due to practical activity and neutralized in the logical appearances of 'that which exists.' The *me* accedes to its specificity and to its integral transcendence only in the form of the 'me that dies' (Bataille 132).

In the context of applying it to Wagner's opera, I agree with Bataille's assertion of a restructuring of the something that dies. The "that which exists" is redefined when its existence alters. This is much like the way that the secret, where its existence is upheld in its concealment, is redefined when it is discovered as a secret. The final movement of the tragic-secret, specifically the deaths in *Tristan und Isolde*, redefine the utility within the function of a secret. Death, specific to the Wagnerian plotline, expresses the tragic-secret in a transcendent and inescapable light. Tragic-secrets, though founded in clandestine intentions, ultimately make the movement from birth to death; their death being that which is discovered. Yet, like striving for transcendence and salvation for Tristan and Isolde, the discovery of the tragic-secret is not a hellish demise, rather it is a final stroke, the most tangible the secret will ever be. When a secret is discovered, it is simultaneously destroyed and at its height of its own definition. To reveal, thus dissolve, a secret as is shown in *Tristan und Isolde* is a sacrifice, a loss, unto revelation.

Though *Tristan und Isolde* is a single example of the interworking of secrecy and tragedy expressed in opera, I view this interpretation as a reflection of a universal human experience *through* secrecy *because of* secrecy. Through feeling, through expression, in this case an operatic plot, the tragic-secret is situated more broadly. *Tristan und Isolde* may be a medieval story, constructed into an op-

era, yet its expression of secrecy as something fragile and destructive is relevant to humanity in general. Tragic secrecy saturates human experience, through literary and musical examinations of what keeping and exposing a secret really means. Aspects of life are hidden to us, and with such hidden-ness there can be a tragedy in not knowing what is concealed. Examining the exposure of something hidden, through any form of expression, is pertinent to interacting with secrecy on a universal scale. Without this tragic progression, in *Tristan und Isolde*, from foundation to dissolution, a secret would cease to be something relevant to an audience, or humanity, as a whole. Thus, interpretation of the secret is, though bound to the tragic, also an evolution of human interpretation and experience. Secrecy, as experienced through the tragic, brings a new perspective to how hidden-ness and discovery are intertwined with how humanity sees, or does not see, the world. The tragic-secret provides opportunity for not only for reflection on secrecy, but also allows us to engage with the hidden-ness and exposure of our own lives.

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QUINN AKINA

NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:

Second Place Winner

Quinn Akina graduated from the University of Oregon in June 2013 with a BA in History. She intends to return to Eugene in September to begin graduate studies in UO's Department of History. When not researching or writing, Quinn enjoys spending quality time with family and friends, hiking, dancing hula, watching Netflix, and... sleeping. Quinn's current historical interests are in how intersections of race, class, gender, and religion shape discourses about interethnic marriages during the nineteenth century.

Mentor: **Ramona Tougas**

THE GENDERING OF ROMANCE- MYSTERY FICTION:

ANDROGYNY IN J.D. ROBB'S *NAKED
IN DEATH* AND M.L. BUCHMAN'S *THE
NIGHT IS MINE*

Statistical evidence indicates that female and male authors respectively dominate romance and mystery fiction genres. No male author, for instance, has won the Romance Writers of America's RITA award in any of the contest's 12 categories from 2002 to 2012 ("RITA Winners"). Conversely, the sex ratio for recipients of the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar award is skewed in favor of males (8) rather than females (2) ("Edgar

Awards Throughout Time"). Such imbalances have fueled debates between social constructionists and biological essentialists on the gendering of genres (here referring to the relationship between an author's sex and textual production).¹ From the constructionist perspective, gender is a flexible human process susceptible to time, place, and individual expression; hence, literary genres are not specific to biological sex. The essentialist position, in contrast, understands gender as a biological mechanism of sex differentiation. Following from such logic: romance fiction, being a sentimental genre that focuses on interpersonal relationships, appears best suited to female writers and readers. Likewise, the mystery novel, as a "kind of intellectual game that follows definite laws" of rationality, becomes the "natural" writing and reading material of males (Dine). Even if the essentialist perspective overlooks the subliminal power of social expectations, it articulates pertinent sex- and gender-based prejudices that authors must confront when shifting genres. For male romance writers and female authors of mystery fiction, therefore, success in a narrative style dominated by the opposite sex seems to necessitate both publication under an androgynous pseudonym and the creation of a romance-mystery novel, which by its very categorization is marketed to appeal to both sexes.²

Entering the constructionist-essentialist debate via analysis of two romance-mystery novels published under gender-neutral pseudonyms—namely: J.D. Robb's *Naked in Death* (1995) and M.L. Buchman's *The Night is Mine* (2012)—this study undertakes NOMAD's "Secret" theme by exploring the perceived need for authors of popular romance and mystery fiction to hide their

¹ "Social constructionists" and "biological essentialists" are my own terms used to summarize the two main positions of this debate.

² See Allen for an overview of the genre's formula conventions and shared readership.

identities behind androgynous pen names. As argued below, similar androgynous characterizations of female protagonists by both Robb and Buchman ultimately negate essentialist arguments that observe correlations between an author's biological sex and his or her ability to construct a narrative of equal appeal to both men and women. The social constructionist stance thus emerges as the stronger position in the debate about genre and gender.

Gender is a social construct with four components: identity, presentation, role, and performance (Dingwell 69). The first is an internal and subjective conception of one's self as male, female, intersex, transgender, or genderqueer. While gender identity and biological sex are not always congruent (a.k.a.: physiological androgyny), Robb's and Buchman's heroines identify with their cisgender³; in other words, both heroines possess female genitalia and identify as female. Presentation, role, and performance are all external expressions of gender that are subject to outsiders' perceptions and labels. While all three refer to self-display, presentation is achieved via bodily appearance, role via economic and domestic contributions (which may be categorized as either masculine or feminine), and performance via personality traits. In cases where gender identity and expressions are at variance, one may employ the term behavioral androgyny.

Androgyny is an elusive term, and scholars continue to contest its various meanings and implications. This study accepts Nicole Dingwell's definition of androgyny as any challenge to the established gender binary of masculine and feminine; according to Dingwell, androgynous people typically "fail to fit neatly into the

³ Gender theorists Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook define cisgender as a label for "individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity" (461).

masculine and feminine gender expressions [read as: expectations] of their society" (69). Although there are at least two types of androgyny (physiological and behavioral), this study focuses solely on the latter.

Under the gender-neutral pseudonym of J.D. Robb, legendary romance author Nora Roberts has created a series of novels that incorporates but reformulates elements of romance fiction and the detective story. Robb's *In Death* series, of which there are more than 40 books, first originated in 1995 with *Naked in Death*. Set some sixty years into the future in New York City, *Naked in Death* introduces detective heroine Eve Dallas and her handsome nemesis/love interest Roarke, whose status as a potential suspect leads to professional and personal conflicts for the novel's protagonist. By the novel's resolution, Eve closes her case and begins an exclusive relationship with Roarke. *Naked in Death* defies the standard romance arc in that it fails to end with either the engagement or marriage of its romantic pair. In fact, Roarke and Eve do not marry until the series' third novel since until that time, "Eve actively opposes, even fears, marriage and considers herself incapable of sustaining a true love relationship, much like the disheveled sleuths of the detective genre" (Ledford-Miller). While Eve demonstrates the cautious, resistant attitude traditionally associated with men, Roarke displays the nurturing behavior more often associated with women. Hence, one may argue that at the same time that *Naked in Death* maintains conventions of the romance and detective genres, Robb's novel also transforms them into something new by reversing gender roles.

The other author of this study, Matthew Lieber, is an upcoming male romance writer who publishes under the androgynous pen name of M.L. Buchman. Buchman's four-part

Night Stalkers series about female SOAR pilots began in 2012 with *The Night is Mine*. The novel follows Captain Emily Beale as she works undercover to prevent an assassination attempt at the White House. Her task is made more difficult given the mutual attraction she shares with undercover partner and military superior Major Mark Henderson, a man whose compassion and vulnerability offsets her aggression and strength. By the novel's resolution, the two opposing but complementary partners complete their mission, and Emily, having been promoted to the rank of Major, agrees to marry Mark. Buchman's series, although younger than Robb's, has gained equal praise for its sustainment of and challenge to gender as well as literary conventions.

Heroines of *Naked in Death* and *The Night is Mine* express gender in an androgynous manner. Curiously, even if neither protagonist intends to present her self as feminine, each is viewed as both womanly and sexually desirable. It is important to note Robb's and Buchman's similar narration choices for physical descriptions of the heroine, since resemblances not only challenge the essentialist association between sex and text, but also reveal the ways in which older romance tropes are perpetuated in romance-mystery fiction. In both texts, physical descriptions are frequently given from the hero's perspective, rarely from the objective third-person narrator's, and never from the heroine's. Robb's narrator informs readers that Eve possesses "wide brown eyes that had never had the chance to be naïve. Her doe-brown hair was cropped short, for convenience rather than style, but suited her triangular face with its razor-edge cheekbones and slight dent in the chin. She was tall, rangy, with a tendency to look thin" (5). Buchman's narrator shares that Emily "has good muscle definition" (4). While non-sensual depictions

from the narrator opens each novel, the dominant voice of each text quickly shifts to the hero, whose sexualized commentary eroticizes the heroine. Roarke's description, for instance, transforms plain Eve into a "tall, willowy brunette with short, tumbled hair, eyes the color of honeycomb and a mouth made for sex" (Robb 43). Mark, too, waxes poetic about Emily's physical attributes, comparing her blond hair to the "silken sun-gold of wheat" (Buchman 186) and her eyes to the "blue of summer sky" (Buchman 61). Reliance on the hero's heterosexual gaze for portraits of the heroine has the troubling effect of transforming her into a sexualized object—a position, which Eve and Emily actively resist by avoidance of "femininity's tools" (i.e. cosmetics and jewelry) (Robb, 12). Despite its effect, the male gaze does function as an important literary device: so long as the hero recognizes his lover as feminine, there is an implicit promise that she, too, will view her self in the same light by the resolution. In both novels, this outcome is achieved only after the heroine: 1) becomes cognizant of her androgynous presentation following interactions with the hero ("femininity had never been one of Emily's concerns until Mark"; Buchman 252); and 2) imagines possibilities for intentional feminine presentations in the future ("Eve wondered if it was time she actually spent money on a haircut rather than hacking away at it herself"; Robb 88–89). Importantly, although neither protagonist alters her presentation, each finds love with the hero despite, or possibly because of, her androgyny.

Similar narrative choices are observable with regard to physical descriptions of the hero. Although Buchman does not utilize the third-person narrator for Mark, readers learn from Robb's narrator that the black-haired, blue-eyed Roarke is 6'2" and 173 pounds of solid muscle. In both works, the heroine provides almost

all descriptions of the hero. Eve describes Roarke as “ridiculously handsome, [having a:] narrow, aesthetic face, [with a] sculpted mouth” (Robb 20), and a voice like “rich cream over warmed whisky” (Robb 40). Emily, for her part, describes Mark as “six feet of broad shoulder and raw muscle cliché soldier” (Buchman 8), who boasts “steel gray eyes” (Buchman 14), “lips as soft as rose petals” (Buchman 59), and a “deep voice that can slice and send a shiver down her spine” (Buchman 7). The aforementioned quotes demonstrate that authors exercise the heterosexual female gaze for portraits of the hero just as they construct depictions of the heroine via the heterosexual male lens. In this way, Robb and Buchman reverse (or balance) the power of the gaze in transforming individuals into sexualized objects. The sexual objectification of the hero by the heroine is further evidence of her androgyny for she exercises a power traditionally reserved for men by openly admiring and praising bodily attributes of the opposite sex (Johnson-Kurek 130).

In addition to their androgynous gender performance, protagonists of *Naked in Death* and *The Night is Mine* have androgynous gender roles. Eve’s and Emily’s occupational positions in the criminal justice and military systems pose direct challenges to classical notions of femininity. To be more specific, because police work and combat fighting have the potential for violence and involve the right to use coercive means to establish social control, these fields were traditionally gendered masculine in both literature and real life (Martin and Jurik 61). Even when women could prove that their participation in the masculine labor force extended from their domestic roles and feminine characteristics, hegemonic gender ideologies that valued female passivity often denied women equal labor opportunities. The women’s movement of the twentieth century

did much to change gender stereotypes and open the labor force (Martin and Jurik 55). Labor statistics are particularly revealing. In 1970, women made up 1.4% of the sworn police force and 1.1% of the enlisted military service; by 2011, their representation increased to approximately 13% and 14%, respectively (U.S. Department of Justice; U.S. Air Force Personnel Center). Hence, while Eve’s and Emily’s entries into “masculine” professions celebrates labor’s evolution and society’s growing acceptance for androgynous gender roles, their existence as the only women in their respective forces testifies to the continuation of structural gender inequality. It would not be a stretch to argue that these inequalities exist within publishing companies today given the demand for male romance and female mystery writers to publish under gender-neutral pseudonyms.

Gender roles inform gender performances. For Eve and Emily, success in masculine professions demands emotional reserve. Robb explains that if Eve “let herself think too deeply or feel too much, she would not be able to pick up her badge or her weapon or her life” (105). The character’s detachment partially stems from a traumatic childhood characterized by parental abuse and “dependency on a [foster care] system that failed her” (Robb 133). While Eve’s orphanage seemingly recalls the older romance heroine, whose helpless circumstances illustrate femininity (Heinecken 160), the character’s remoteness lends to her a masculine quality that takes her outside of the damsel-in-distress archetype. Buchman’s heroine is similar to Robb’s in that she too does her “best to hide her emotions as trained” (139), believing such to be a marker of professional competency. Such a correlation by heroines between gender role and performance manifests in their repression of emotions and their reliance on intellect, which remembers Aristotle’s

dichotomy between the feminine heart (emotion) and masculine head (intellect). As Robb and Buchman illustrate by way of their protagonists, a prioritization of the latter to the exclusion of the former has both positive and negative consequences.

To a certain degree, emotional detachment is one desirable consequence that allows both heroines to overcome sex- and gender-based prejudices in the workplace. Eve's "manly brains, guts, patience, nerve, and instinct" lends itself to an aloofness, which in turn, makes her an asset to the investigative team (Robb 175). Likewise, Emily's "calm, cool, collected, and arrogant" personality gives her the nerve to "fly into a place no sane person would go to bring her action team out" (Buchman 26). Repression of sentiment thus proves crucial to the judicious exercise of discretion for handling volatile, life-threatening situations. Moreover, this masculine performance of gender wins both women respect in their male-dominated institutions as evidenced by the fact that all male co-workers address the protagonists with the honorific title of "Sir"—a form of address that acknowledges Eve's and Emily's masculine gender performances.

If aloofness is beneficial in professional settings, it can also prove detrimental in personal contexts, inhibiting the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships. To Roarke, Eve confesses the following: "I've only been close to two people in my entire life. And even with them, it's easy to hold back" (233). For Emily, as well, "an old friend was a rare commodity" (Buchman 144). The protagonists clearly desire to develop close friendships, but cannot establish platonic or romantic ties due to their fear of emotional intimacy. One exchange between *Naked in Death's* couple is particularly illustrative of this tension between desire and actualization:

Roarke: "What are you afraid of? What are you afraid they'll find if they get a look inside of that head of yours? That heart of yours?"

Eve: "I'm not afraid of anything." She jerked her arm free, but he merely laid his hand on her cheek. A gesture so unexpected, so gentle, her stomach quivered.

Roarke: "Let me help you."

Eve: "I—" Something nearly spilled out. But this time her reflexes kept it tucked away. "I'm handling it." She turned away (Robb 95).⁴

Until Eve realizes that vulnerability does not mean weakness, Roarke's overtures appear threatening and the two cannot form a meaningful relationship. Buchman links emotion, femininity, and weakness even more explicitly than Robb for his protagonist describes the internal pleasure she receives from Mark as a "total pointless and female reaction...[that must be] bashed back into the corner" of her mind (138). Conditioned by their work environments to shrink away from emotional vulnerability, the heroines of *Naked Death* and *The Night is Mine* prove ill-equipped to deal with heroes' romantic/emotional displays. Withdrawal on the part of heroines is evidence of their behavioral androgyny and may be considered as a challenge to the essentialist argument, which contends that women are inherently driven by sentiment.

Sexual aggression is another example of heroines' masculine gender performances. Interestingly, Robb's and Buchman's structuring of sex scenes marks a novel shift away from the standard characterization of males as the sexually dominant partner. Eve

⁴ Speaker indicators are my own and were added for the purpose of clarity.

and Emily are the subjects of the sentences, performing actions (“slamming”, “dragging”, “grabbing”, “attacking”, “taking”, and “ravishing”) upon heroes. Notice too the masculine language, which gives to heroines sexual agency, such as the power to “take” and “have”, unheard of in earlier romance novels (Johnson-Kurek 130). In this way, Robb’s and Buchman’s heroines are not only androgynous in terms of their gender performance, but also represent a new and sexually powerful female archetype in contemporary romance-mystery fiction.

While the two novels of this study celebrate women’s sexual power, neither is completely separate from older ideologies of sex and gender performance. *Naked in Death* and *The Night is Mine* both construe heroines’ emotional detachment and sexual aggression as threatening. Because Eve believes that sex with intimacy is a “tangling of emotions [and] a battering war on the system” (Robb 156), she, like Emily, insists that sex only engage the physical senses—a preference, which Robb and Buchman portray as a misuse of sexual power. In comparison to their love interests, Roarke and Mark conceptualize sex as a joining of the body, mind, and heart. While the heroes’ emotional vulnerability might indicate a feminine (androgynous) gender performance, their insistence that sex be sentimental appears to indicate their deeper understanding of human relationships. For example, Roarke teaches Eve that “lovemaking could be fun. It was a revelation to find that she could laugh and wrestle over the bed like a child” (Robb 245). Likewise, sex with Mark is an emotionally cathartic experience for Emily, who “for the first time in a decade ...felt such a relief that she cried out...she’d never felt so safe in her life” (Buchman 172–173). Because the hero transforms the heroine’s understanding of sex from that of a physical joining

to that of emotional lovemaking, he practices the long-established male prerogative of social mastery, and thus, performs gender in a masculine fashion. In light of this, the heroine’s perceived masculine strength of emotional reserve actually signifies her lack of power over the social world, and in turn, her performance of gender is feminized.

Androgynous characters in Robb’s and Buchman’s series represent a new archetype gaining popularity in contemporary fiction. According to romance writer Abby Zidle, the androgynous heroine and hero are inventions of women’s minds and desires. While Robb’s work possibly supports Zidle’s thesis, similarities between *Naked in Death* and Buchman’s *The Night is Mine* suggest that this archetype also reflects men’s minds and desires. Thus, the two works offer strong support for the constructionist stance when juxtaposed.

Zidle is not the only critic who discusses the literary significance of androgyny. Although romance author and feminist Linda Barlow does not respond directly to Zidle, her arguments are in conversation. Contrary to Ziddle’s belief that the androgynous hero represents women’s ideal masculinity for men, Barlow contends that he “is not a man at all, [but rather a] split off portion of the heroine’s own psyche, which will be reintegrated at the end of the book” (42). If read in light of Barlow’s thesis, Robb’s and Buchman’s novels become a re-working of the modern women’s bildungsroman in romance-mystery fiction: the resolution (e.g. the romantic pair’s monogamous commitment) is not merely a restoration of societal order as suggested by acquisitionist librarian Tracy Allen (163), but also symbolizes a fusion of the heroine’s masculine and feminine qualities. Furthermore, whereas men transition women

into adulthood (read as: an appropriate sense of femininity) in older romances, this responsibility and agency shifts to the female protagonist in *Naked in Death* and *The Night is Mine*. Given that both heroines capture the love of heroes despite inconsistencies between their gender identity and expressions, Robb's and Buchman's work seems to propose androgyny as an acceptable alternative to the gender binary.

With their nearly identical characterizations of androgynous female protagonists, Robb in *Naked in Death* and Buchman in *The Night is Mine* reject the notion that gender is a biological concept. If they concede anything to the essentialist position, it is that the sexes are not so different as to be incapable of sharing desires. Resemblances between the two examined novels of this study are significant for they provide strong support for the social constructionist position in debates surrounding the gendering of genres. Just as *Naked in Death* testifies to the fact that women can create a mystery story that follows laws of rationality, *The Night is Mine* proves that men are able to craft a sentimental narrative that focuses on interpersonal relationships. In the end, both novels demonstrate that the gendering of genres is nothing but a fabrication that creates barriers for individuals aspiring to write under their own names in genres of their own choosing.

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VALERIA LEVKOVSKAYA

NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:

Honorable Mention

Valeria is a junior, studying philosophy and Spanish. They have a special interest in political philosophy, feminism and queer theory. They were very excited to bring their passion for comic books and media criticism together with their scholarly work.

Mentor: **Andréa Gilroy**

GREG RUCKA'S *BATWOMAN*

AND THE GENDER DUALITY OF
THE BAT

Think about Batman. His image is everywhere, ubiquitous in American contemporary culture. The black bat silhouetted against yellow background appears on t-shirts, in movies, cartoons and comics. His story is well known: a child who sees his parents murdered and vows to enact justice in corrupt and crime-ridden Gotham City. The child becomes the vigilante Batman, the secret identity of Bruce Wayne, billionaire socialite.

This secret identity, the separation between man and Bat, define him. For years, there has been speculation that Batman's secrets run much deeper than just his vigilante identity. Beginning in the 1950s with Frederic Wertham's book *The Seduction of the Innocent*, all the way to recent Batman and Robin parodies on *Saturday Night Live*, there has been a common cultural suspicion that Batman's real secret is his identity as a gay man. There has been fear that Batman's representation of masculinity is meant to queer the very ideals of heterosexual masculinity. Because he is so ubiquitous and his story is so widely recognized, reading his identity as queer representation is an opportunity, because new possibilities for gender emerge in the division between public persona and secret identity. The possibility that such a familiar figure, with its dual identity and its vigilante mission, could be a representation of queer gender is made real in *Batwoman*. She is an explicitly gay hero with the same basic characteristics: she has a dual public identity as a socialite and a secret vigilante. By examining *Batwoman*, especially as she is written by Greg Rucka in *Batwoman: Elegy*, it becomes possible to explore the gendered implications of Batman's dual identity.

Greg Rucka is responsible for the reintroduction of *Batwoman* into the DC Comics universe. DC Comics is one of the two largest comics publishers in the United States. Superman, Wonder Woman and the Justice League are all heroes in the DC universe. *Batwoman*, whose civilian name is Kate Kane, exists now in DC Comics as a lesbian and former West Point cadet. In terms of widely recognized identities in lesbian subculture, butch gender is the complement to femme gender, and Kate expresses both with her butch public persona and her very femme and aggressive persona as *Batwoman*. The current Kate lives an explicit duality between her gendered

presentation as a public figure and her secret identity as a superhero. The way that *Batwoman* is written by Greg Rucka and drawn by J. H. Williams III throughout *Batwoman: Elegy* mirrors many of the themes commonly associated with Batman and Bruce Wayne, in that her presentation as a queer superhero can be used to bring to the fore the underlying gender instability and the possibility of not-so-secret queerness within the super masculine gender construction of Batman. By exploring her historical role in the Batman comics and contrasting it with her contemporary presentation, I show why *Batwoman* in particular can trouble Batman's gender in ways that other characters cannot. Reading *Batwoman*'s gender presentation using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to clarify the contrast in gender between *Batwoman* and Kate Kane, I will demonstrate that the similarities between *Batwoman* and Batman combined with the long history of queer readings of Batman lead to a new kind of gendered reading for Batman himself.

Batwoman is useful to take up in this respect for a number of reasons. In general, the supporting characters in the Batman universe provide the best foils for looking at the Batman. There is an extended cast of heroes that populate Gotham, known as the "Bat Family." The Bat Family appears less frequently outside of the comics themselves, with the exception of Robin, who has appeared in a wide range of film and television adaptations. Members of the Bat Family offer an opportunity to reflect on the frequently inchoate character of Batman and further understand his gendered affect as a historical whole, instead of focusing entirely on a single iteration. *Batwoman*, because she shares so many general characteristics with Batman, especially in terms of how her identity is constructed, is useful specifically in dealing with questions of gender in Batman.

Besides their obvious parallels, wherein both are socialites by day and vigilantes wearing the Bat symbol by night, there is another special historical relationship between Batman and Batwoman that makes Kate Kane especially apt for troubling the normatively masculine Batman. Batwoman originally appeared in Batman comics in 1956 as Kathy Kane. It is common in mainstream American comics for characters to be introduced in one era, and then removed when they become irrelevant or uninteresting, so having a previous version of Kate as Kathy is fairly unremarkable. When Batwoman was first introduced as Kathy Kane, it was in response to accusations that Batman and Robin were actually acting as ambassadors for the gay lifestyle (Daniels 85). This assertion famously came from psychologist Frederic Wertham in the 1950s, when he claimed that the relationship between Batman and Robin was homoerotic in nature, which led to the climate of gay panic surrounding Batman (Daniels 86). DC Comics included Kathy Kane as a love interest for Batman to assuage concerns about homosexual moral degradation.

Despite all this effort, Batman remains morally degraded from the perspective of anti-homosexual conservative critics. Kathy Kane, who was created to reassure readers of Batman's heterosexuality during the 1950s and 60s, was reintroduced as Kate Kane in 2006, and Batwoman became one of the few explicitly queer heroes. At the same time, in the decades since Wertham's original claims, other readings have emerged that emphasize queer subtext in Batman media. Freya Johnson, in her viewing of *Batman Forever* (1995), finds that the relationship between Batman and Robin turns "the queer subtext hidden beneath the surface of many Batman representations into an overtly queer supertext" (Johnson). Queer signifiers in this

film present Batman and Robin as a homoerotic partnership. The Batman and Robin relationship is parodied and loaded with even more queer signification by the *Saturday Night Live* cartoon sketch *The Ambiguously Gay Duo*. While not explicitly presented as Batman and Robin, the protagonists of the series exchanged similar banter, drove a similarly shaped car, and even shared a secret hideout where they would prepare to go out on missions as a duo. The similarities are obvious. It becomes increasingly difficult to take Batman seriously as a representative of any kind of heterosexual masculinity when arguments against this are bolstered by parodies that reemphasize queer signifiers in the original text.

To make sense of the gendered presentations of both Batman and Batwoman, I turn to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Production is the content of performative gender, which happens in comics through the presentation of images. Sedimentation is the process by which all those images build up over time into a gender. In brief, gender is produced when a performance is understood to be of a particular gender, and that performance becomes the concept of that gender ("Performative Acts" 101). By creating bodies that look a particular way and then explicitly coding them masculine and feminine, comics artists *make* masculinity and femininity. The features of gender that stay the same over time are re-affirmed by the creation of images and performances that are understood both by the readers and the creators to be a particular gender. Differences are also incorporated and integrated into the reproduction of performances which are already coded as a gender. The always-produced nature of this gender is therefore somewhat flexible, since new ways of presenting gender are always emerging, without deviating too much from the existing gender performance.

What was inherently masculine fifty years ago is not necessarily masculine now. According to Butler, gender emerges historically as a process of sedimentation, where all the production of gender accumulates over time into that one gender (“Gender Trouble” 139).

Gender presentation in comics is conditioned by a very particular kind of sedimentation. Everything in comics is communicated through illustration and writing (McCloud 25), and that includes gender presentation. It is the nature of the business that the authors and artists responsible for writing and illustrating into being the gender of each character change regularly. The result is that each character is written into a gender over and over. According to Butler, when identity is formed performatively, it is actually “multiple and coexisting identifications” that “produce conflicts, convergences, and innovative dissonances within gender configurations which contest the fixity of masculine and feminine placements” (“Gender Trouble” 85-86). Concurrent with gender performativity’s role in forming binary gender categories, production and sedimentation allow for more expansive possibilities than the two on offer in the binary. The traditional categories of man and woman are destabilized, or become incoherent, by virtue of the constant change and complexity inherent to their formation.

Batman is a perfect example of multiple-identifications; the dual identity defines his character. Aaron Taylor, in trying to understand how gender is produced specifically in superhero comics, writes that comics are “conducive to unstable corporeal identities, which can be extended to the instability of gender construction and reinforcement” (Taylor 348). The production of Batman through stories that emphasize the identity split also produces a split conception of gender. There are stark gender

differences between Batman and Bruce Wayne, which troubles any essentialist kind of masculinity. Batman is extremely muscular and foreboding, emphasizing crime fighting over relationships. Bruce Wayne is the charming playboy, who spends all his time in impeccable suits with beautiful women. It is impossible for Batman to be a perfect expression of manliness, because at least some of the time his gendered expression must deviate from essential masculine heteronormativity by virtue of the dual identity. The secret identity makes it impossible for Batman’s gender to fit into a masculine identity conditioned by a gender binary, because he has already exceeded the limit of the singular acceptable masculine gender.

While the dual identity that defines him aids in the production of a destabilizing masculine gender expression, it is the proliferation of Batman stories that allows him to express a particular kind of gender sedimentation. He is created and recreated constantly throughout a variety of mediums. All these retellings of his story reinforce his existence as a singular character in the popular imagination, because all these Batman stories have in common the set of characteristics that make them a Batman story, and not just the story of some other costume-changing superhero or crime detective. Any attempt over years and decades of maintaining a single cohesive gender falls apart under the weight of changing ideas about gender, especially when it is supposed to be the gender of one specific character.

Batwoman shares many of the same characteristics as Batman, which is what makes her such an apt character for exploring further how the dual identity of Batman is a queer duality of gender. Like Batman, she maintains two very different identities, as a secret vigilante hero and public socialite. Unlike most representations of

Batman, however, the visual presentation of Batwoman and Kate Kane throughout *Elegy* explicitly emphasizes the difference between those two identities. Both identities perform a different kind of gender expression. The visual aesthetic plays into the gender presentation of both, so the contrast informs both their relationship to each other and to a greater conversation about gender within the particular Bat split in identity. Throughout the first four parts of *Elegy*, the two identities are given defined visual limits in the form of borders and gutters. Their space on the page is delimited by the stylization of those borders, so each one is surrounded by their own proprietary style of lines. The sharp contrast in style serves as a reminder that there is also a contrast in identity at play.

Batwoman's pages, which are visually distinguished from Kate Kane's pages, feature primarily jagged lines. Pages where she is in action as a vigilante are often arranged in double page spreads around a Bat symbol. The majority of the page is split into panels that help cast into relief the shape of the Bat. These panels are often non-standard shapes, forming roughly triangular panels with jagged borders and gutters. Frequently, these are aspect-to-aspect panels which show different parts of the scene but do not generally show the passage of time (McCloud 72). These panels allow the reader to have a broader view of the scene as it is captured in a single moment, but also lend their energy to the Bat-shaped center panel, which is always occupied by Batwoman. The scene can still have complex, multi-faceted events, but ultimately, the focus of the scene is on Batwoman herself. The tension of the lines used to limit these panels creates a sense of movement and action that they could not get just from their internal content, since they are, as drawings, temporally static. This makes any action or observation taken from Batwoman's

point of view into a very intense experience, as if everything that happens to her is twice as urgent as every other moment in the comic. The energy imbued by this focus gives Batwoman all the excitement of any traditional action hero.



Figure 1: from *Batwoman: Elegy* part 1

It is important to note that when Batwoman is Kate Kane, the panels in which she appears become more regular. There are more regular rectangles and significantly calmer colors. *Elegy* part 1 features a double-page spread (see figure 1) that highlights the difference between Batwoman and Kate. From left to right, the panel style changes drastically as Batwoman finishes her night's work as a vigilante and returns to her home base, removing her costume, which includes a long red wig and a mask that is reminiscent of Batman's cowl. On the left, there are the familiar triangular panels

with jagged gutters. Those panels become smaller, and the black gutters break apart so that the white which borders Kate's pages can emerge. The message is clear: the Batwoman identity is dissolving in favor of the Kate identity. This contrast in panel style shows how Batwoman is distinct from Kate. Each exists differently in the world. The difference in Batwoman's and Kate's physical figures is also very important. Friedrich Weltzien, in his examination of the costume change in producing masculinity, asserts that "There are only two alternative identities, each of which is a masquerade" (241). The secret identity is visually separated from the socialite identity. The maintenance of two such radically different identities is necessary because one is a secret. Her particular dual identity, because it fits so neatly in the paradigm of the Batman story, shows how the aesthetic separation between vigilante and socialite inherently produces a duality of gender. The division between both is determined by the importance of the secret. The disguise exists on every level, including the aesthetic presentation of each identity in the world. Batwoman/Kate Kane is inevitably performing two different kinds of gender.

While the framing is obviously very important, perhaps a more obvious expression of the Bat duality is shown through Batwoman's/Kate Kane's bodies and dress. Batwoman is presented like a textbook dominatrix. She is fully covered from neck to feet in a black, skintight, shiny suit. She has the heeled boots, gloves, and pointed black mask. Instead of a traditional feminine sexuality, with its connotations of the submissive sex object, the dominatrix evokes consensually sexualized violence and aggression. Additionally, Batwoman's coloring is austere, and frighteningly so: she has white skin, which is sharply contrasted by the shiny black and bright red accents of her uniform and her wig. The threatening sexuality of the

dominatrix, along with the sharp edges and blades that accent her costume, affirm that Batwoman is dangerous.

On the other hand, the skintight suit, red lipstick, and long wig evoke her femininity. While this femininity might seem at odds with such aggression and violence, there is a complementarity between the violence associated with the dominatrix and the feminized body. Because Batwoman's feminine gender presentation is explicitly linked to the superhero costume, she invokes the idea of the femme. Femme gender expression emphasizes the deliberateness of its femininity. With her long, curly hair and makeup, it is clear that Batwoman's femininity is very much deliberate. By tying that femme expression up with violence, Rucka and Williams III raise the status of femme gender expression. The relationship to violence implies physical power, and power is closely related to domination. Batwoman's femme, therefore, is not just pretty or carefully feminized presentation, but a simultaneous assertion of femininity and dominance.

In contrast, Kate Kane is coded more like a butch woman. Whereas being femme implies a deliberately feminized self-presentation, being butch implies a more masculine stylization. Throughout parts two and three, we see that Kate has short hair, wears very little makeup, and tends towards menswear. In a formal social setting, she dons a black and white tuxedo. These are all masculine-coded modes of gender presentation, but she is still recognizably a woman. This serves as a reminder that even when she is not actively dealing with her romantic relationships with women, she is still very much a lesbian woman, and her queer sexuality factors into her gender presentation. Along with those surface cues for Kate's butch gender, she also does the body building work that

develops the muscle needed for Batwoman to execute the kind of violence which helps define her character.

The physical work that Kate does sets her gender firmly apart from Batwoman, especially in light of her traditionally butch lesbian presentation, but that does not make Kate's butch identity better than her femme identity. Kate is more likely to have dark circles under her eyes and rumpled, shapeless clothes. She looks like she can be subject to mundane human weaknesses. In contrast, Batwoman's smooth, perfected femme exterior projects unfailing competence. So while both identities exist along the femme/butch divide, unifying them within one person implies a queer gender conception that allows room for fluidity, wherein a person can change their gender presentation while still being the same person. The kinds of butch and femme presented by Kate/Batwoman are performative in that they play off of recognizable gender performances. They affirm the existence of the gender, while also expanding the possibilities inherent to the category. Moreover, it implies that this kind of dual gender play is queer by its nature, because the kind of gender being instantiated by this performance does not belong to the binary man/woman split. Instead, it expands the possibilities for a genuine expression of womanhood and denies any essentialist notions of what it means to be a woman.

Since it can apply to women, it follows that queer dualized gender can also play out with men and categories of manhood. The old fears about Batman's secret queer representation are made manifest when he is re-read through the conception of gender made possible by Batwoman. While Friedrich Weltzein would like to claim that Bruce Wayne's identity embodies manliness (232), it is impossible to ignore the way that Batman and Bruce Wayne have

been subject to queer readings for decades. Weltzein was right in that these queer readings of the Batman identity do not often single out Bruce Wayne. The embedded queer subtext of *Batman Forever* and the *Ambiguously Gay Duo* parody both single out the Batman identity. But even assuming that the Bruce Wayne identity is an exemplary presentation of heterosexual manhood, the entire Batman/Bruce Wayne duality cannot be traditionally masculine. The two identities belong to one character, which inherently undoes any heteronormative work, because traditional masculinity does not account for a plurality of gender identities. After all, Batman is Bruce Wayne's secret identity. Or Bruce Wayne is Batman's public identity, depending on the reading. Either way, Batman is the identity that must be hidden from the public at large, especially from the police and criminals that might be interested in harming Batman/Bruce Wayne.

At the same time, Batman belongs to a community and a tradition of heroes who recognize one another and work together. The most obvious example for Batman is his crime-fighting partner, Robin. This idea of a secret identity that must be hidden in front of the larger world, but is obvious and celebrated among a smaller minority group, mirrors almost exactly the experiences of many gay men. They can only express themselves as gay when they are in the company of other gay men, with the subcultural in-jokes, gestures and other kinds of expression which are particular to their community. This parallels the kind of recognition found for Batman in the superhero community. For example, Superman and Batman call each other Clark and Bruce, suggesting that superheroes recognize each other in the full complexity of their identities, without having to hide one identity or the other. When

gay men are faced with people outside their community who might out them as gay, many of them change their behavior suddenly so as to seem straight, which includes a change in how they express their masculine gender and their gendered relationship with the world around them (Eribon 2). In effect, they assume a straight identity as a form of camouflage. Bruce Wayne is the public face which camouflages the secret Batman identity, preventing him from being outed. Bruce Wayne protects Batman from censure and legal consequences. If one asserts that Bruce Wayne, at least, is a genuine presentation of heterosexual masculinity, then the Batman/Bruce Wayne identities begin to parallel the lived experiences of gay men very neatly in much the same way that the Batwoman/Kate Kane identities parallel lesbian identities. The nature of the dual identity itself is that it cannot be extricated from queer gender presentation.

This leads me to conclude that characters with the traits of a Bat Family hero are recognizably queer, given that those traits are the division of the public gender identity and the secret hero gender identity. Batwoman's gender duality embodies familiar gender expression from the lesbian community, and Batman's gender duality embodies a common mode of gender secrecy for gay men. The many characteristics that Batman and Batwoman share with respect to how their public and secret identities are linked together makes it possible for Batwoman, by virtue of her status as a queer superhero, to clarify the gender-queering mode that was already present and active in determining the gender of Batman. There is a delightful irony here. Fears about a gay relationship between Batman and Robin motivated the introduction of Batwoman in the first place, and she was originally written into comics to stabilize Batman's masculine heterosexuality. But it was her re-imagination

as a queer woman that brings to the fore a queer reading of Batman, emphasizing that the dual gender identity of the Bat is inherently a queer identity.

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Mentor: **Caroline Claiborne**

STREET IDENTITY—

SHEPARD FAIREY AND OBEY

Perhaps the greatest example of secret identity in the art world can be found in the graffiti and street art movement. As both a shield against incarceration and as a vital component of the counter-culture community, artists often create alias ‘tag’ names. However, one of the most influential artists of the street art movement has never employed a ‘tag’^{1*} identity in an over twenty-year career. Rather, he has created an image for himself with

¹ * A tag is a scrawled name on a wall using marker or paint. [TAKI 183 in Appendix A]

everything from icons pasted up around the streets of LA to ornate poster designs shown around the world. Street artist Shepard Fairey has created a distinct public identity in the street art world and beyond without the mystique of anonymity; rather, repetition and mass circulation have made him successful. My research explores the history of Fairey’s artistic career, particularly his prolific use of “OBEY” campaign imagery.

In order to understand the significance of Shepard Fairey’s career and how his work disrupts traditional notions of identity and artistic value, a few terms must be clarified. For the purposes of this research, ‘identity’ refers to the name an artist chooses to operate under as well as what concepts an artist ‘identifies’ with and what they find self-validity in: the particular art form, cultural perspective, or movement he or she adopts as part of the creative process. This could mean a movement, the campaign they head, or the didactic aspects of their art. Identity is extremely important to street artists, as none of them plan on meeting their audience. Instead, street artists become well known through widespread recognition of their artwork. Mass circulation in terms of this research, therefore, refers to the proliferation of an image, and within the context of street art this means the production and distribution (pasting it up all over a city) of an image—such as the image of Andre the Giant.

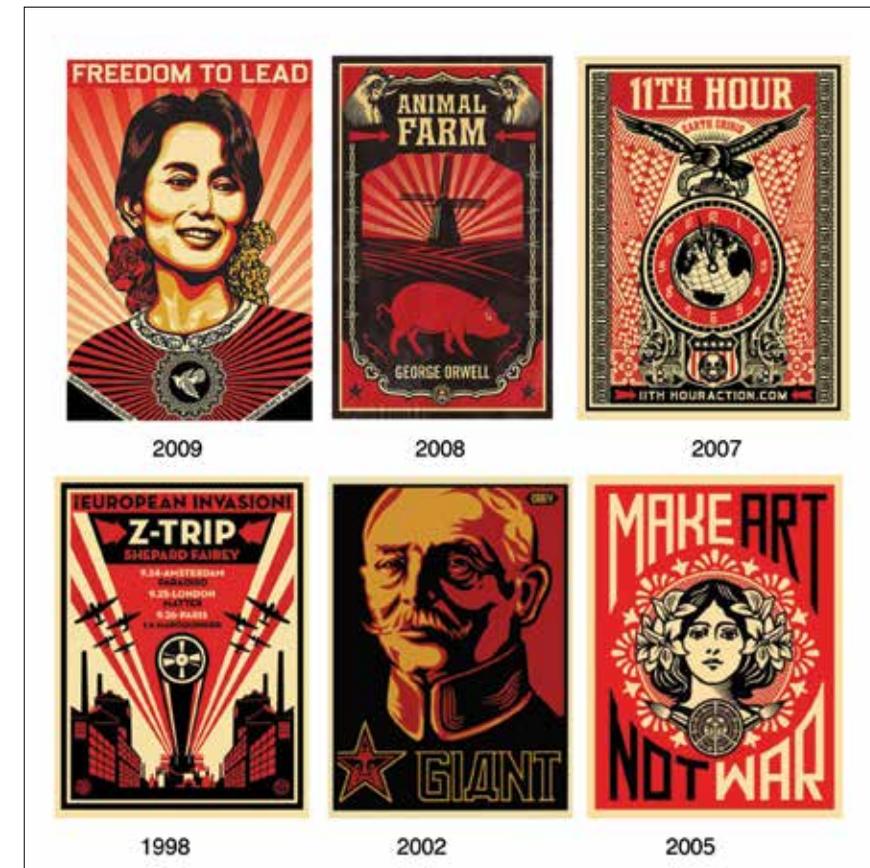
Additionally, Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936) will provide insight when applied to an investigation of Fairey’s career. Though the concepts do not ‘directly’ apply to street art for obvious chronological reasons, his overarching theories of “how the masses relate to art” (Benjamin 34) is still very much relevant. Shepard Fairey’s target audience is “the masses” that Benjamin refers to: the entirety of public society,

which is not limited to the insular “art world”. Fairey’s art is not like original, one-of-a-kind paintings, exclusively available to only a select few. Instead, Fairey’s art is appreciated as ever-present and available to “the masses”. Fairey’s “mass” culture approach contrasts the exclusivity and originality that drives gallery culture, and even the styles of many prominent street artists.

The social impact of a mass-producing artist requires careful dissection. Fairey began in urban culture (often described as “low” art), but he also gained a great deal of influence in the world of “high” [fine] art. He disrupts the traditional distinction between them two by existing in both worlds using the same style, which features the mass repetition of powerful imagery. Fairey has entered the sphere of common knowledge as well via his success in design and illustration. Tension between “low”, often illegal art and commissioned, legitimized fine art has always been central to understanding Fairey’s significance as a professional artist. As a well-known vandal and as a familiar fine artist, Fairey’s career precariously sits between high and low art, constantly at risk of irritating either party. This underlying tension creates a uniqueness that may be the very thing that has made Fairey a household name, and the main point of study in this essay. In order to lay a foundation for understanding Fairey’s approach to art and marketing, I will outline a brief history of street art, as well as Fairey’s career.

To understand Fairey’s importance, we must first understand the foundations of the art movement from which he emerged. The American street art scene came from the graffiti movements in New England during the late 60’s thru 70’s [Appendix B] as well as the influx of the European street art of the 80’s. Like graffiti artists, street artists operated under “tag” names. Both cultures—they often

overlap, as they are both classifiable as vandalism—are associated with territorial gangs as well as with Fairey’s strain of disgruntled youth: skaters and musicians. Street art can be simply defined as a hybrid between graffiti art and amateur advertisements. The tools



Appendix B

of advertisement-minded street artists are stickers, paste-ups, and posters. The idea of “reclaiming the streets” came as a response to the commercial boom of the 80’s and the proliferation of billboards, blockbuster film posters, and store advertisements. The creative individuals who spent time in spaces coated in advertisement took to reclaiming the urban canvas as their own. Like the subway car “bombings” of the seventies [Appendix B], success

with these techniques often comes from the sheer amount of one's products out on the streets. One poster is noticeable to a small number of viewers. Hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of posters are better, and more people, people who perhaps wouldn't usually pay attention to a poster-covered fence or alleyway, notice them. Thousands of posters are ideal. Visibility undermines cultural noise and commandeers the space, which is the purpose of the posters.

Although Fairey seems to be the exception to street art's anonymity protocol by rejecting a tag, he greatly contributed to the history of the trend because he created his unique identity at an early, pivotal point in the movement. A Rhode Island School of Design student in the late 80's, Fairey began with a stronger understanding of fine arts than the average urban artist. The "Andre the Giant has a Posse" sticker [Appendix A] came about in 1989 as an exploration—one that would explode into a lifelong identity and company called the OBEY campaign. As Benjamin notes, "One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later" (30). Although this was not Fairey's motivation from the start, the stickers did eventually create a demand. Opportunity came naturally as Fairey opened himself up to personal enterprise and as his influence grew. As Fairey puts it, he "began to ponder the sticker as a means of expression and communication for an individual, instead of just representing a band, company, or movement" (*Supply & Demand*, 17). The stickers ended up all over Providence, Rhode Island—anonously and by the hundreds. "The ball had begun to roll," Fairey says about the escalation of the project as it spread to New York and Boston, "but the amazing thing is that I almost lacked the self-confidence to try to put something of my own out there" (18). Fairey doesn't explicitly state this, but he

apparently had no interest in a tag or alter ego for street art. Shepard Fairey never says a word about choosing a Banksy-like path under a false name. It's possible that he never consciously rejected having a tag; perhaps he simply never bothered. But Fairey had a different



Appendix A

vision for his career. "Shepard took something that promoted absolutely nothing and made it represent something simply by promoting it," Taylor wrote (29), and thus concisely summed up the definition of OBEY—a representation of nothing that became, through Fairey's positioning and mass placement of the image, something.

As Shepard Fairey emerged from stickering, not paint, his work developed differently than many of his contemporaries. Paste-ups and posters are completed in a studio and then placed in an urban environment; they are already complete when they're placed, which is therefore a much faster process than painting freehand or even with a stencil. Fairey's first hit outside of stickers—a paste-up—was a billboard in September 1990. Buddy Cianci, who was running for mayor of Providence, had his face covered with a four-foot paste up of Andre's face. Fairey was a complete amateur; he only used watered down Elmer's glue and a rolling pin. The prank was anonymous, so Fairey didn't have to reap the consequences, but he did see the tumultuous reaction the city experienced. "Although I didn't intend to make a statement, the incident opened my eyes to the power of propaganda. An ambiguous image can stir up so much curiosity that it functions as a sort of Rorschach test by stimulating interpretation and discussion" (25). Artistic skill mixed with a keen awareness of the power of propaganda made Shepard Fairey a candidate for the international, artistic fame he eventually achieved.

Jason Filipow, a talented designer and valued friend and member of the OBEY staff, described Shepard as having "an always amazing ability to talk himself out almost any potentially dangerous situation", a useful skill as a street artist and a political-natured illustrator (29). Filipow has known Shepard since they were teenagers; he and Kevin Taylor skated with Fairey and built a friendship long before the omnipresent Andre came into things. As a RISD student, Fairey had the foresight to print through his business venture Alternate Graphics, giving him the opportunity to produce an incredible amount of work. The OBEY campaign and Fairey's artistic goals carry a great deal of cultural meaning—even if Shepard Fairey was

the only one who realized it at first.

Inspired by the John Carpenter film *They Live* (a campy 1988 cult classic and commentary on consumerism), Fairey claims, "people don't realize they're slaves to consumerism because everything is glossy on the surface. People are just sleepwalking through life, and OBEY is my way of splashing cold water on their faces" (32). This is an interesting claim for Fairey to make as very little of the content of his work has a shocking effect. A demonic George Bush is the best example of a controversial image, but the vast majority of his work is aesthetically pleasing and implies thoughtful meanings without relying on disturbing a viewer for effect. Radial pattern background (an homage to Russian propaganda posters of the early 20th century), warm color palettes, and ornate patterns enthrall viewers and carefully rely on form to be eye-catching. Fairey's uniqueness also results in a good number of his pieces looking extremely similar [Appendix B]. However, all of Fairey's images rely on inherently powerful imagery (a natural result of Fairey's oftentimes-political subject matter and propaganda-inspired style, which could be mistaken for shock value. Other street artists who have achieved a similar level of success use disturbing imagery—such as Banksy and Roa. Therefore, Fairey distances himself from "the norm" for street artists in more ways than disregarding a tag: he uses formal styles, rather than disturbing subject matter to surprise viewers.

Returning to the chronology of Fairey's career, the OBEY campaign continued to escalate through the 90's. It hit speed bumps here and there, but persistence and the involvement of more and more people (either contributing directly or just fueling Fairey's fame) continued to help it grow. In 1994 Titan Sports, Inc. threatened Fairey with a lawsuit over the trademarked name "Andre

the Giant”. In response, the artist created a more icon-like image and less of a portrait, becoming the OBEY GIANT image we see today [Appendix A]. The original image of the wrestler was from a magazine Fairey saw—chosen utterly at random. Most people recognize Andre Rene Roussimoff (1946–1993), the first WWF hall of fame inductee and 7’4” literal giant, from his role in *The Princess Bride* as Fezzik. Fairey never knew Andre; the icon was used as an in-joke with skaters, that was all. Over time the OBEY icon moved further and further away from the original portrait. In 1995 Fairey created a more ‘Big Brother’-like version of OBEY, both as an allusion to George Orwell’s *1984* and to Russian constructivist propaganda—an influence seen in most of his prints with radial stripe backgrounds (35). By the time this adjustment was made, Fairey had a firm foothold in San Diego as a street artist and an illustrator for hire. Even in 2013, OBEY stickers, paste-ups, and stencils coat Southern California. They can be found in hundreds of cities worldwide, but it is Los Angeles and San Diego that have been utterly covered.

OBEY pieces are surrounded and layered with thousands of other artists’ work. Fairey may be amongst the most famous, but he is still only one of many street artists who work in the space. Although a significant one, OBEY is one of many contributors to the urban canvas. OBEY is also an example of a centrally organized studio at a significant rate. The headquarters of the OBEY campaign are rooted in Los Angeles. Fairey’s Black Market studio formed with friend Dave Kinsey was the machine of OBEY that made it into what no other street artist had managed to make his or her work: a business. The team put out stickers, stencils, paste-ups, and posters by the thousands—possibly the millions—into the 2000’s [Appendix D]. What Fairey didn’t put up himself, he sent out to

anyone who asked. An online presence through www.obeygiant.com allowed Fairey to be reachable. OBEY became a network of Shepard Fairey’s crew, adolescent graffiti bombers, and everyone in between.

Despite his well-thought-out business ventures, Fairey is far from safe. He is possibly the greatest vandal alive, but is nowhere near possessing diplomatic immunity. Shepard Fairey has been arrested over 16 times (Simek interview). Generally, when an anonymous street artist is caught, there is an eventful unmasking (its publicity coincides with how famous the artist is) and, unless they evade severe charges, find their careers destroyed. The police at some point confront everyone, but few artists are under such immense scrutiny as Shepard Fairey. In addition to his multiple sanctions for vandalism, legal issues with the Obama campaign poster have put him under probation since September 2012 and will last until 2014. Because of his time in the spotlight, Shepard Fairey is perpetually at risk. He has accumulated a month’s worth of time in jail over the course of his career (Jin article). Fairey explained his entanglements with the law, saying, “I’ve just been straight up arrested for charges ranging from advertising without a permit—they always make it sound so bad you’d think you were about to assassinate the President—to malicious destruction of public property. Let’s see, possession of a tool of criminal mischief if you have a can of spray-paint on you. There have been a lot of different things. I got arrested for putting up a sticker. It was because RISD security had wanted to get me for so long. They actually had a picture of me in the security office” (“Shepard Fairey-2” article). Even from the beginning, Shepard was the infamous Frank Shepard Fairey of RISD. At one point six police cars came to the X-Games in Providence where Fairey was putting up stickers; six police officers arrested Shepard Fairey for his first true

arrest. Since then, Fairey has never been able to work in peace.

Fairey is a point of contest with his fellow urban artists as well, often called a “sell-out” and alienated from the street art world because of his impressive salary and enormous influence. No artist can be that successful in the traditional sense without sacrificing some degree of the counter-culture ‘edge’ of the movement. Nonetheless, Fairey is still acknowledged and admired by some contemporaries. Roger Gastman, an accomplished graffiti writer and influential mediator between the street art and mainstream publishing culture said:

Shepard has, without a can of spray paint, reached the tallest buildings, bombed cities repeatedly, regulated his spots, and remained true to his original message, which he has spread worldwide several times over. (*Supply & Demand* 44)

Banksy, possibly the most famous of the gallery-hopping, newspaper headlining “sell-outs”, called OBEY GIANT:

repetitive and nauseating... for some reason, that fucking face always seems to jump out at you even from the smallest little sticker... We don't like Shepard because he makes us feel scared and lazy. I am absolutely positive he has made more reaches than any graffiti writer in history ever has done or ever will. And that means he's won. (44)

Everyone in the art world knows that Shepard Fairey is Banksy's “California contact” and the two of them work very closely. The Bristol enigma is known for his brutal honesty.

Despite this criticism, Fairey has not abandoned either side of his creative enterprises: high or low art. He has had a foot in each camp since the very beginning; Fairey is a street artist and fine artist. To some degree, he is still connected to street art—its roots at

the very least. He is still putting up illicit work, despite his fan base and the paparazzi. In some respects, Shepard Fairey has become a mainstream name in the art community. Articles are constantly released about what he's up to—gallery shows as well as his legal status. However, Fairey himself acknowledges that the “foot in each camp” aspect of his career makes him a sometimes-outsider as his own choice. “I really don't like any of the high-brow gallery stuff at all. None of that inspires me. I like stuff that has some resonance of everyday life” (“Shepard Fairey-2” article). This sentiment is purely street art. Benjamin muses, “Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times” (XII). In contrast, the city itself is a gallery for a street artist because architecture is his or her canvas. Unlike with one-of-a-kind paintings, the repetition of Shepard Fairey's art uses both imagery and multiple, simultaneous, public forums to showcase his work, which creates an effect through repetition, not through originality. Though this may not please the purists of either camp, Fairey has managed success in the street as well as the gallery scene referred to by street artists as “the white box”.

Though Fairey has been doing gallery shows since his student contributions in art school, his biggest step into the spotlight came in 2008. The commission to do the Obama campaign poster brought a huge amount of fame but also controversy. Fairey became mainstream in popular culture, but he has also been commoditized in ways beyond his control. He was additionally commissioned to do the TIME cover 2011 for Person of the Year: Barack Obama. At the time, Fairey was still in the middle of his case with the Associated Press, which was only just settled in September 2011, after Fairey was found guilty of tampering with evidence. He

will remain on probation until 2014. In recent interviews, Fairey seems unconcerned with his criminal record (PacePrints video). He has, after all, had experience with criminal charges in the past.

Beyond fine art, Fairey has influenced the common art world as well as larger pop culture. Shepard Fairey was a significant contributor to Banksy's film "Exit Through the Gift Shop", which was Oscar nominated and hugely circulated. Fairey even appeared as a guest star on "The Simpsons" in 2012—an episode called "Exit Through the Kwik-E-Mart" in which a parody of the iconic OBEY appears with Homer Simpson and the word DOPE. Fairey turns out to be a spy for the police in the end, making fun of his "sell-out" status. It is no small thing to be able to poke fun at oneself like Fairey does. His style has is widely known as he has become a household name. Fairey is cited in art classes, and other projects imitate his work. By becoming the face of street art, he has somewhat remade street art and re-imagined it in an illustrator's image. Spotlights on artists like Fairey (and his acknowledged equal and associate Banksy) may be encouraging us to lose sight of street art's roots and the lesser known artists who still practice the form using more traditional methods.

For twenty years, Shepard Fairey and the OBEY campaign he began have become iconic in the street art movement as well as fine art advertisement and design. He continues to exponentially increase his influence, just as his stickers, paste-ups, stencils, and posters continue to proliferate across urban environments worldwide. From his distinct interest in propaganda and commitment to the artistically demanding craft of design, Fairey has emerged with an immensely influential identity. Though a similar story can be told for street artists who use the usual tag alternate identity, Fairey has created his authoritative persona by using his real name and multiplying the

public visibility of his artwork. Shepard Fairey is a talented artist, but there are many talented artists in the world. What Fairey has done differently is that he has literally flooded the urban canvas with his work and used repetition of themes to attract viewers. He has repeated meaningless icons—such as an eccentric WWF wrestler—so many thousands of times that his theories of supply & demand become apparent; they are *forced* to become apparent. A great street artist is one who will not be silenced, who gets the attention of every person who views the work. Fairey has struck a balance of the two. He has seized the opportunity and his luck of being in the right place at the right time with the right talent to demand that the entire world look up on every city surface and see the face of OBEY with only through the use of repetition and mass circulation.

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Mentor: **Eva Hoffman**

THE SHAME OF HONOR IN ARTHUR SCHNITZLER'S *SPIEL IM MORGENGRAUEN*:

*PUBLIC OBJECTIVITY AND THE PRIVATE
NEGATION OF THE SELF*

Arthur Schnitzler's *Spiel im Morgengrauen* finds its setting in fin de siècle Vienna, a transitional time characterized by the rise in importance of the bourgeoisie. This state of change connotes not only the rise of a middle class, but a consequent change in roles and expectations for those classes located above and below what was characterized loosely as 'bourgeois.' Due to the paradigmatic contradictions inherent

to a society that is socially stratified, but allegedly champions equality and objectivity. *Spiel im Morgengrauen* problematizes the blurring of identity with monetary value in a world where money not only assures happiness, but appears as the only means of obtaining fulfillment as a person.

My work is to highlight how Schnitzler's main character Willhelm supplants fiscal wellbeing and monetary exchange for his actual wellbeing and his meaningful relationships. His plight reflects a society that dehumanizes its citizens and favors the mechanics of order and accomplishment over the preservation or cultivation of health or meaning. Lieutenant Willhelm Kasda believes that he must be wealthy in order to be respected, and that this validation from an approving public is the only meaningful way of actualizing himself—a belief that essentially suggests that a person has no value unless they are held aloft in the opinions of observers. My discussion of role of the public sphere and its effect on the individual is informed by Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* and Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Both of these works handle the rise in importance of the public sphere as an objective court, and the problematic this creates for the individuals who functionally create, yet are also created by this notion of a “public” versus a “private” sphere.

The conflict in this narrative is constituted by Willhelm's calculated pursuit of wealth and honor, which drives him to take risks that endanger his public image. His eager attempts to gamble in hopes of winning big culminate in his incurring such a sizable debt that he seems to favor total self-negation over the prospect of continuing to live with the shame he feels for

gambling. This state of affairs at the end of the story stands in curious opposition to Willhelm's statement that “an officer must know in the end how far he may go,” and his eventual suicide demonstrates a desperate attempt to protect the abstract honor of his position, which is evidently more important to him than his actual life (Schnitzler 24). His death has the double-edged effect of simultaneously exposing and concealing an identity that he resents.

The entirety of the story takes place in the span of only 2 days, but in this time Willhelm Kasda transitions from a dignified man with 120 Gulden to his name to a man who owes 11,000 Gulden to a man of great influence, Consul Schnabel. The Consul has a considerable amount of money at his disposal; he holds a prestigious position outside of the country, and has only his amusement at stake in the game of cards that takes place. Willhelm's involvement in the card game is provoked traces back to the appearance of a dishonorably discharged acquaintance, Otto von Bogner, for whom Willhelm offers to gamble in an attempt to obtain the funds necessary to absolve von Bogner's debt of 1000 Gulden. Otto's debt is due to his ‘borrowing’ money from his place of employment to support his family, a selfish act done for justifiable reasons. This represents an antipode to Willhelm's destructive situation at the story's conclusion, for he puts his own prestige with before the well being of others, unless it has the ability to be beneficial to him.

Lieutenant Willhelm Kasda exemplifies the relationship of honor and shame as two sides of the same coin; it is a fixation on his ‘objective’ public image that fuels the shame he feels about private inadequacies, such as his lackluster uniform and

his relatively low social status among the honorable players in the card game. The paradoxical calculating mindset employed in tandem with a conviction that life is ultimately guided by an objective fate, ushers the lieutenant down an ill-conceived path to wealth and dignity which leads directly to his self-destruction. Willhelm Kasda is not a man of great influence, and he is self-conscious about his frustrations and financial limitations to a degree that only perpetuates his dilemma, in that he perceives life to be a game, *va* game that he can win only if he is able to follow the rules correctly.

I understand the term ‘calculating mind’ in the sense of Georg Simmel’s essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, in that the card game through which Willhelm Kasda perceives his world “corresponds to the ideal of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and of fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula” (Simmel 13). This means that the game, which is inherently based on chance, should be informed by an objective set of rules. The paradox lies in that Willhelm sees the game as omnipotent and absolute, allowing for players to win if they play their cards right—but where then lies the role of fate?

One cannot say with certainty that Schnitzler was only critical of the modern bourgeois class in his day, but he clearly problematizes the social function of caste in his work, and the ways in which these roles are used to define or negate individuals. The character of Lieutenant Willhelm Kasda has been examined from a variety of angles that pertain directly to what I will discuss here, but my focus lies not in discerning how Schnitzler chose to portray events and individuals in this work, as Oswald Panagl

discusses in *Das Leben ein Spiel—das Spiel ein Leben* [the Life a Game—the Game a Life].

Oswald Panagl, famed for his work on Natural Morphology in the context of linguistic studies, asserts in his interpretation of the story as being structured after a game, that most characters in *Spiel im Morgengrauen* come across as “strange marionettes” who appear to mindlessly fill whatever role is assigned to them, e.g. “A young actor who has internalized the stage direction for his role.” I find this analysis could go even further into the roles of these ‘will-less’ individuals (Panagl 187). The context of a game, especially as we can experience it in the age of computers and 3D-massive multiplayer games, consists at least partially of people who only exist to serve some function. The ‘game’ around which the novella revolves is not only a metaphor for social structures of the time, but this perception of life as a game also fosters a self-fulfilling prophecy for Willhelm Kasda, who personally imbues all of the other players in the card-game with the power to control his fate. As far as Willhelm is concerned, it is a given fact that one can make a good life from wealth and influence, a belief that is notable in his observations about possibly winning during the card game with Consul Schnabel: “that would be funds enough for anyone to make their happiness” (Schnitzler 55). The question of agency versus fate is only made more confusing by Willhelm’s suggestion that he will do well in the card game as a balancing measure for how poorly he has fared in matters of love of late. Willhelm tells Bogner that “one can perhaps put more faith in a proverb than in people,” referring to the German phrase “Glück in der Liebe, Pech im Spiel,” which translates to ‘luck in love, bad luck in the game’ (Schnitzler 23). This statement suggests that

one who fares well in romantic relationships will not do well in games of chance, as well as the inversion. A blind faith in this turn of phrase contains elements of Willhelm's conviction that there are rules and that fate or external circumstances are the deciding factors, two contradictory convictions.

Happiness could be a person's positive reaction to their situation, but establishing wealth and respect as qualifiers for this happiness implies that happiness and its inversion (sadness, misfortune) can only come from external causes; that is, in the form of a reward or a punishment. If this is the case, then the individual's capacity to shape his or her own identity is limited to a passive role as receptor. Richard Sennett characterizes modern man as bound to societal conventions that are considered to be objective fact. In this way, morals are no longer virtues or subjective appraisals, but responsibilities that can be quantified and rationalized.

When belief was governed by the principle of immanence, there broke down distinctions between perceiver and perceived, inside and outside, subject and object. If everything counts potentially, how am I to draw a line between what relates to my personal needs and what is impersonal, unrelated to the immediate realm of my experience? It may all matter, nothing may matter, but how am I to know? I must therefore draw no distinction between categories of objects and of sensations... The celebration of objectivity and hardheaded commitment to fact so prominent [in the 20th century], all in the name of Science, was in reality an unwitting preparation for the present era of radical subjectivity (Sennett 22).

This resonates with the appraisal of Ralf Allerdissen, a scholar of Arthur Schnitzler, who asserts that Schnitzler's Lieutenant Gustl and Lieutenant Willhelm Kasda "found a replacement for [his] lack of a system of values" in "the officer's caste and its accompanying norms, through which he achieved a new identity" (Allerdissen 55). This respectable military role is not only an attribute of Willhelm's, it determines everything about him; being a 'good' officer is the only means he considers plausible for securing his wellbeing, and thus, his survival. This conviction is curious insofar as it is shown to be contradictory in more than one sense. Nestled in the higher ranking class of military personnel, Willhelm Kasda considers himself to be a good officer, who knows "in the end how far [he] can go," but he deviates from his own plan of quitting when he loses his last hundred and goes so far as to ask himself "what does this Bogner mean to me anyway?" He asks this in spite of the fact that he is only at this card game to allegedly help Bogner, not just to win money (Schnitzler 53). This leads the lieutenant into a situation which parallels that of the dishonorably discharged comrade Otto. "That could only happen to a civilian" (Schnitzler 17) is Otto's conclusion about his dilemma of stealing money to provide for his family, which suggests firstly that an officer is excluded from being able to find themselves in this situation, and secondly that the realms of possibility are governed by social status. This means that a person who is an officer is fundamentally different from anyone who is not, reinforcing the notion that the official status of a person defines them, and exaggerating Willhelm's similarity to the bourgeois conviction of social status as indicating moral value.

Clearly the individual is capable of deviating from his or her role, as demonstrated by Otto von Bogner's ability to enter and leave the military, but this brings the validity of membership in the military as a qualifier into question. This is particularly problematic when considering that Willhelm is only in his position because of his family's lineage: "So your father was also an officer?", "Yes sir, Herr Konsul, who knows if I would have broken into a career in the military under other circumstances" (Schnitzler 71). Willhelm seems to think that he can walk away with a large sum of money even after borrowing a significant sum without any discussion of the terms. Willhelm Kasda and Consul Schnabel act as if they have the upper hand in the situation, but Willhelm lacks financial means and is relying on the assumption that the Consul might be offering him money to keep playing in the same way Willhelm himself would offer Bogner cigarettes upon receiving him as a guest in the morning (Schnitzler 12).

Willhelm's understanding of honor is a reflection of the archaic concept of nobility falling by the wayside, and the growing importance of the 'role of the public' in constituting the individual in the bourgeoisie, a movement away from moral values and family ethics toward more calculative and economic perceptions of the world. A person's reputation in public can be considered a reflection of the individual, or how a particular person comes across to others, but this is not necessarily evidence of what that person is, merely how they seem. The social expectations and pressures present in Arthur Schnitzler's *Spiel im Morgengrauen* seem to suggest that the individual who *enters* the public sphere is actually only constituted by their public reception. If this

is so, then the 'private world' of the individual is essentially meaningless, other than in how it influences that individual's public behavior. If honor is not a personal quality or ideal, but instead a positive recognition by the authority of the public, then honor is wholly reliant on the presence of an audience. Because of this Willhelm seems to strive for an objective perspective, "an officer must know how far they can go;" he does his best to internalize the external expectations of his time and is essentially always standing beside of himself. Though he participates in multiple, small social events over the brief duration of the story, he tends to remain fairly passive in his interactions, and keeps his personal thoughts to himself.

The importance of Peter French's observation that early scholars [Ashley, Bacon¹] "warned that people are prone to value the opinions of the vulgar multitude, rather than those of the virtuous, choose the wrong audience and have only vainglorious to popularity to show rather than true honor (French 4), two-fold in the context of our Lieutenant Willhelm Kasda. He is not only guilty of seeking approval in the sense that he considers popularity a form of honor—he also neglects to consider that the opinion of this "vulgar multitude" might be different from his own. He projects his internalized ideas of honor onto the abstract notion of the public and has tangled himself amongst the overbearing societal conventions and his own assessments of right and wrong. He can behave selfishly, but he seems to consider his opinions to be attuned to the general consensus, thus they are not his own opinions. Instead he thinks he is aware

¹ Peter French refers specifically to discussions in *Of Honour* by Robert Ashley, and of *Praise* by Francis Bacon.

of what the rest of the world expects of him. He blurs the lines between the “the three layers [of male honor]” that Peter French cites from Peter Spierenburg’s *Men and Violence*: a person’s own feeling of self worth, this person’s assessment of his worth in the eyes of others, and the actual opinion of others about him” (French *ibid*).

This discussion arises in the context of Peter French’s analysis of the implications of dueling regarding honor, for which he suggests a “spatial conception of morality. In such a morality human identities are station identities. Personal identity is almost exhaustively given in terms of locations and associations that form and define a social grid.” I believe that this spatial morality is relevant here, because as Michel Vanhelleputte notes in *Der Leutnant und der Tod (The Lieutenant and Death)* “the primary value of [his] existence is the officer’s honor” (Vanhelleputte 219), thus Willhelm Kasda does not see his being good or bad as a person as relevant. All of this is tertiary to his honor as a high ranking member of the military, and being moral or immoral may be founded on a personal evaluation of right and wrong, whereas being an officer, and thus dignified or worthwhile, is an empirical fact.

Willhelm desires glory because he wants to be able to live comfortably, thus not for the moral virtue of doing good and being recognized; he thinks he needs to be recognized in order to be validated as a person. The public sphere represents an opportunity to gain this recognition, but his private life serves the sole purpose of finding out ways to gain the economic advantage he wants in public. The private life he leads is representative not only of what is not seen by the public, but also what *must*

not be seen by the public. It is within the power of the abstract ‘audience’ presented by the bourgeois public sphere to grant honor as well as shame, but on the individual level, one can seemingly only feel shame and desire honor. There is a yearning here on the individual level to be accepted by the public, but congruent to addressing the ‘public’ as an audience, writers such as Jürgen Habermas and Richard Sennett have suggested that this relegates the individual an actor on a stage. A secret from the world, potentially a dirty secret. Honor, if it requires the public in order to be validated, is essentially but that this of course requires the individual to be exposed to some extent. For Willhelm though, who sees his private life as inconsequential other than providing evidence to him of his financial success, his focus seems to be in *masking* his private self in favor of how we wants to be seen.

Willhelm’s fixation upon honor is reflective of the self-negation inherent in the mechanized system criticized by Georg Simmel, and the necessity for him to be viewed favorably in the public realm implies that he must not be seen for what he is in private. If he can cover up enough of his weaknesses as a human, he stands a chance of being seen as strong and respectable by the omnipotent, bourgeois audience. As Lavaque-Manty discusses in *Dueling for Equality*, with particular focus on the practice of dueling as an exceptional privilege of the bourgeois, and thus a contradiction to the democratic principle of equality. One secretly endeavors to actualize themselves to their best advantage, but stands by the conviction that all should be viewed equally by the public. In the example of dueling, however, there are two effectual contradictions to this equality, in that women in particular could typically only have a passive role at most, and

that dueling was an exclusive right of the bourgeoisie. Women had the unfortunate circumstance of being the reason for many duels, and commonly were only either the object at stake or were ‘in need of having their honor restored’ by an honorable man. If only a man can dishonor a woman, then only a man can restore her honor (French 7), but it is already clear that this equality is entrenched in the still predominately male-centric world of fin de siècle Europe.

Given that the bourgeois class had exclusive rights, there is already an intentional fallacy in their striving toward equality, but the moral implications of stepping outside of the law for a matter of honor is worth consideration. If honor is the reception of a person insofar as they have been observed or exposed, how then can honor be lost or restored in a ‘private matter’ such as dueling? The fundamental contradiction of the role of the public eye exposes the self-centeredness of this movement, that curiously bases itself on rules it deems absolutely necessary to maintain order but still ensures itself the liberty of overstepping said boundaries. It appears here that the moral codex of the bourgeois class is an instrument of convenience, which coincides also with the interestingly oscillatory nature of Willhelm’s world view regarding calculability and inevitability (fate). He sees chance as the decisive factor in most situations, but employs manipulative strategies to try to gain advantage, which suggests that he does believe in agency to some extent. This agency is intrinsically bound to the individual, however, and thus should not be exposed to the rest of the world. Willhelm is concerned with how dignified he comes across in a situation, not with how he feels about what he has to do to gain this recognition.

When Otto von Bogner arrives Willhelm tells his assistant not to send him away “just because someone receives someone as a guest does not mean they travel in the same circles” (Schnitzler 10). Willhelm does however prefer that he is not seen with the ‘thief’ and even asks “how does he look right now?” Adding that he should tell any of Willhelm’s superiors that he is “no longer at home” should they drop by while he is talking to von Bogner. Agency is a secret he tries to keep, which is a convenient means of deferring all responsibility for his actions to fate. This externalizing force is given authority as an objective and fair observer, disregarding the still present hierarchy in the public sphere.

For the experiences about which a public passionately concerned with itself sought agreement and enlightenment though the rational-critical public debate of private persons with one another flowed from the wellspring of a specific subjectivity. The latter had its home, literally, in the sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family. As is well known, this family type—emerging from changes in family structure for which centuries of transformations toward capitalism paved the way—consolidated itself as the dominant type within the bourgeois strata (Habermas 43–44).

Lieutenant Willhelm Kasda perceives the individual to be a reflection of circumstance rather than a product of intention, in the sense that his thinking is clearly conditioned by the notion of formalities and market exchange; he sees external factors as the only influence on a person’s place in life and the decisions they make. “If the audience is indifferent, the agent may experience

shame at having failed to impress them” (French 9). Willhelm pursued his family’s career in the military because it seemed the most likely to be successful, but his fear of being seen as inadequate leads Willhelm to an unshakable faith in formulas and structures, which comport the agency of an individual to a simple variable and allow for the outcomes of personal relationships to be calculable and defined. Though he does not write these all out as equations, he clearly has ulterior motives in many of his handlings. Personal relationships are a matter of convenience, in that one engages in interactions with others in order to benefit one’s own ends. The formalities of receiving guests, standing at attention, offering cigarettes to visitors—these are all things, in Willhelm’s eyes, that one does because they must in order to reap the benefits of social engagement.

He relies on reciprocity in exchanges, where he does not value people’s company or ideas, but assures himself that by fulfilling his role, e.g. as a host or guest, he will be rewarded in this “market exchange” (Sennett 10) that replaces intimacy. Georg Simmel’s *Metropolis and Mental Life* outlines a discussion of modernizations psychological consequences for the individual. The growth and function of large cities is contingent on structuralized and mathematically sound arrangements of daily life, “punctuality, calculability and exactness” (Simmel 13); thus money becomes necessary as a mode of universal exchange. Without this universal exchange, all of our interactions and business in the city would be terribly convoluted and at risk of standstill or chaos, but Simmel suggests psychological side effects to making value and exchange among humans a matter of ‘objective’ and quantifiable ‘worth’. In short, money as a universal

measure of value results in a relativistic mode of thought that can easily exclude the quality and essence of an object or relationship from consideration, reducing decisions to a mechanical process of comparison free of subjectivity, “transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and of fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula” (Simmel 13).

This equality is a democratic ideal but it homogenizes the world around us “to the extent that money, with its colorlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values” (Simmel 14) such that we conceive of things foremost by how much money they are *worth*, and don’t bring into question what they *are*. For Willhelm this means that when he pursues honor [wealth] as a means to happiness, he is fulfilling his responsibility to himself as an individual. This pursuit of wealth is unilateral among all people in his eyes, he cannot get his head around the idea that anyone makes decisions without explicit consideration for the economic gains at hand. This is his perception of the role of the individual: the world is an arena in which individuals compete to actualize themselves in the public eye.

Willhelm’s secret goals of self gratification lead him to make rash decisions that have grave effects on the reputation he cherishes so dearly. The consul demands that he resign his post if he can’t come up with the money, and in a sense, Willhelm does just that. But I find that Willhelm chose to kill himself to preserve some semblance of how he appeared gracefully in public because he was overwhelmed with shame after Leopoldine left him just enough money to save his comrade but not himself and explaining that he had been mistaken in leaving her money

after sleeping with her. The role reversal of her leaving him money after they sleep together puts him in such an indefensible position that he has to end his life. It is still a question though why Willhelm's assistant explicitly states that Willhelm had a male comrade over (Schnitzler 159), is interesting because it is hard to say whether he chose to bend the truth for Willhelm, who had incidentally spent his last night with the wife of the uncle who would find his body (Schnitzler 156). Was Joseph, the assistant, trying to protect Willhelm's honor by bending the truth? Was Schnitzler's intent in writing this novella to depict a man who selfishly acted until he could no longer bear his own reputation, or was he suggesting that the reigning paradigm might hold notions of objectivity so high that an individual has no choice but to sacrifice themselves in order to survive in the public world? Everything seems to work out better if the truth never actually comes to light, even though these falsities are the source of tension in the first place.

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SECRET SPACES

This paper explores secrecy in its spatial form through an analysis of secret spaces. One might equate a secret space with a private space, however the two are far from the same. A private space is one that is removed (formally) from other spaces. Secret spaces on the other hand are not completely removed, but rather embrace spatial adjacencies—secret spaces need the juxtaposition of varying spaces in order to become secret. In this

light, a secret space can be defined as a place where one finds himself or herself on the inside looking out, meaning, he or she shares a knowledge about a space that others do not. On the other hand, if one were to be on the outside looking in, he or she would gain a certain experiential knowledge from that perspective as well. This experiential knowledge reveals the secrecy embedded within architectural spaces. This paper takes a phenomenological approach, analyzing particular spaces through photographs, personal experience and architectural writings, as well as through field research, interviewing users of said spaces. Through this method, the paper will present a variety of analyses about these spaces, and will start to unfold secrecy as it is manifested in the built environment.

As touched upon above, this paper addresses the experience of a space, rather than its individual formal organization (although this obviously does affect the experience one has within the space). A significant initial note: secret spaces are not necessarily foreign to us. Rather, we know them intimately, and seek them out knowingly or unknowingly. They are the breakfast nook, the favorite reading chair next to a window, the courtyard within a building. Wherever one finds refuge, one discovers a secret space; meaning a secret space offers a kind of personal comfort other spaces do not. Terminology is important here, so for the purposes of this paper I will differentiate the varying terms discussed as follows:

secret: (n.) information or knowledge withheld (from someone); private information or knowledge shared among certain individuals.

secret space: (n.) a space where the user experiences and shares an intimate knowledge of the space, whether the user be on the inside “looking out” or on the outside “looking in.”

private space: (n.) a space that is defined by its primary user, often described as a possession (i.e. one's office, or one's bedroom).

public space: (n.) a space that is open to and widely used by the public.

Please note that a secret space is defined by an experience of that space, where private and public are defined by its use. Typically, architecture is spoken of in terms of its program (use), specifically its function and relation to other spaces (such as “public” versus “private”). As far as organization is concerned, secret and private spaces are often juxtaposed next to a larger open space, for experiential and programmatic reasons, respectively. This framework enables one to further analyze and explore the nature of these spaces, and their phenomenological relationship to secrecy.

As defined before, secret spaces are defined by experience. The organization of these spaces plays a role in how each individual's spatial knowledge is experienced, but the organization does not define it. In his work *A Pattern Language*, Christopher Alexander proposes 253 architectural design principles that range from architectural structure and organization to how one should decorate and personalize a space. The principles suggest certain implementations, which I will reference here, but perhaps more importantly Alexander identifies specific relationships that are key to the experience of a space. In my interpretation, many of these happen to directly deal with secret spaces (not explicitly, though they embody many of the criteria I have defined). The following are examples of Alexander's principles that can double as secret: “140. Private Terrace on the Street” (664–67); “171. Tree Places” (797–800); “176. Garden Seat” (815–17); “179. Alcoves” (828–32); “180. Window Place” (833–37);

“204. Secret Place” (930–31). Note that all of these types of spaces are either adjacent to or a smaller aspect of a larger, open space.

Consider three of his patterns. Alexander describes a distinct experience of each that we can relate to the concept of architectural secrecy. Concerning his 140th pattern, Alexander suggests, “the common rooms open onto a wide terrace or a porch which look into the street. Raise the terrace slightly above street level and protect it with a low wall, which you can see over if you sit near it, but which prevents people on the street from looking into the common rooms” (667). Alexander articulates the placement of the terrace precisely so that those who occupy the terrace share a certain spatial knowledge that those on the ground or those in the common rooms do not. The terrace is protected by the slightly raised wall, somewhat separating it from the sidewalk and street, despite still playing a role in street organization and activity. A terrace is typically seen as an interim space—one that acts as a buffer between an expansive and a reserved space. This aids in to its secrecy. It is connected to larger spaces while still maintaining its integrity, allowing the user to withdraw into it, becoming an observer of the other two spaces. The observer in this instance is in view of two spaces, becoming a part of both.

Another pattern that concerns itself with the outdoors is the “Garden Seat.” Alexander is explicit about how “essential it is to give ourselves environments in which we can be in touch with the nature we have sprung from” (816). In this principle, he states that “somewhere in every garden, there must be at least one spot, a quiet garden seat, in which a person—or two people—can reach into themselves and be in touch with nothing else but nature ... Pick the place for the seat carefully; pick the place that will give you the most

intense kind of solitude” (816–17). The garden seat experience is different from the terrace experience. The terrace is solely an aspect of a public realm, where the garden seat can be an aspect of a public or of a private garden. Garden seats have been depicted for over a hundred years. One well-known painting of a garden seat is Claude Monet’s painting of his wife, *Camille Monet at her Tapestry Loom*, painted in 1875 (see below).



Camille Monet at Her Tapestry Loom, Monet, 1875

Monet frames this painting as a spatial narrative. His wife chose this seat because it gives her the comfort that she desires—and the secrecy she desires. Camille shares an intimate connection with the place, from the vegetation to her loom to the chair she sits on. The space provides an experience for her, giving her a certain kind

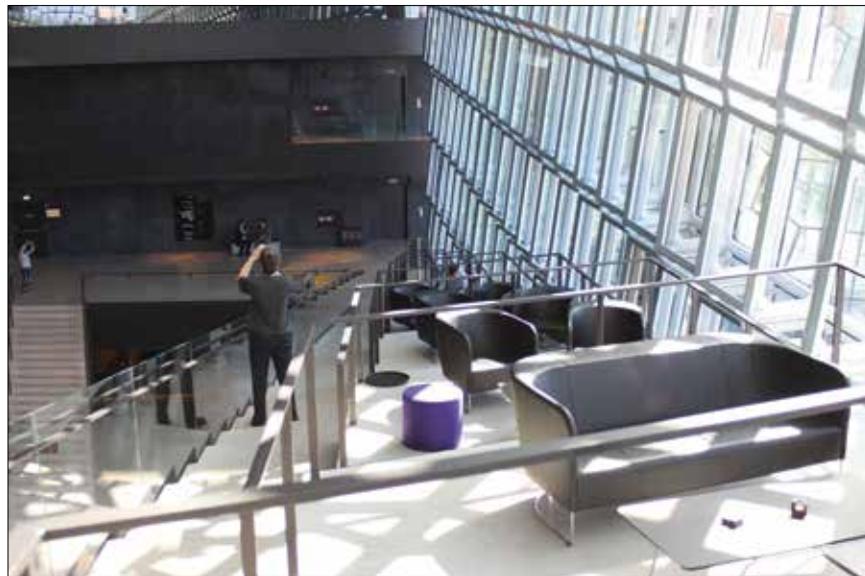
of knowledge about the space, which is precisely why she chooses to paint there. On a different note, Monet’s perspective is equally secretive. His vantage point is on the outside looking in, establishing a different spatial connection with the space. Perhaps Monet’s title for this piece further explains Camille’s connection to the space: *Camille Monet at Her Tapestry Loom*. One could easily conclude that Monet is solely referring to Camille’s ownership of the loom here. But the painting is of Camille at work in her creative space. The painting gives the viewer a secret look into this secret space.

Another noteworthy pattern is the “Window Place.” Alexander says they are necessary because “a room which does not have a place like this seldom allows you to feel fully comfortable or perfectly at ease” (834). This is due to humans’ natural desire for daylight and for comfort. These desires play into the window seat’s particular experience. When on the outside looking in, one feels compelled to sit at a window seat. When on the inside looking out, the user is “perfectly at ease.” This ease not only comes from being in contact with daylight and feeling comfortable, but also from having an intimate understanding of the place and how it functions and is experienced. This place can take on various forms, as indicated by Alexander: a bay window, a window seat, a low sill, and a glass alcove are all sufficient secret spaces that can be categorized as window places. These places too are aspects of larger rooms.

The experiential knowledge of the above spaces becomes secret, in a way. These spaces are not treacherous, as the connotation of a secret sometimes implies. Rather, the secret takes the form of a tangible awareness or understanding of the space. It involves looking beyond the fabrics and colors that accent the space, and truly grasping at what the space is providing. The terrace provides a place

for the user to be connected to the street and the adjacent building, without being encroached by either. It is secret as far as the user is willing to keep it so. The garden seat is a place for one to contemplate and reflect within a natural setting. It is a place of solitude and secrecy. The knowledge obtained here is secret by nature. Finally, the window place is designed for comfort. The spatial knowledge of this space is one that is meant to put the user at ease. As different as these cases are, they share one feature, which reveals much about the nature of secrecy: the secret emerges as not information *withheld*, rather information *gathered*.

The following analyses are of spaces I have visited and experienced. I did not think of these as secret spaces initially, was able to understand its spatial and experiential secrecy after the fact. For example, another secret space that falls into Alexander's "Window Place" pattern is Harpa Concert Hall's interior terraced seating (see below). This strip of seating lies along a window wall, overlooking an atrium space below. When I was visiting Harpa, I was compelled



Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Center, Reykjavik, Iceland

to sit in one of these sitting areas. A love-seat style couch or two individual chairs, and a coffee table furnish each box. The seats were all movable, but all faced up the terrace. I moved from area to area to see what kind of experience each seating space offered. Each area, although connected to each other, had its own particular experience. Each space offered its own view of Reykjavik and of the rest of the Hall. Despite being visually connected to the other space, and physically connected through the terrace, the place where I was sitting became a separate place in and of itself. My personal being had a greater understanding of it, and it became a personal space—a secret space—just for those few moments.

Another kind of window seat experience, for instance, is in Alvar Aalto's Mount Angel Abbey Library in St. Benedict, Oregon. Organizationally, this seat is not only defined by the window, but



Mount Angel Abbey Library, St. Benedict, Oregon. Alvar Aalto

also the angled walls, the stacks that provide a perpendicular axis, and the hallway that runs alongside it. This seat sits alone because someone moved it here (I did not). This is evidence that one seeks this kind of space for refuge. One can only assume that the user read here (I certainly did), but it can also function as a place of simple contemplation. This space is rather simple, and just a small space within quite a large room and library, but it serves a purpose, and the spatial knowledge here is specific to its placement.

Post occupancy user interviews are a helpful way to better understand how certain spaces function, and how they are experienced in reality. I had the opportunity to interview a user of a secret space. The nook is a window bench set back from the south lobby/circulation area in Lawrence Hall on the University of Oregon campus. Two identical spaces are located on either side of the south entrance. Both have south-facing windows, and two wood benches parallel to one another (with about three feet between them) that sit against a floor to ceiling wall. The north facing side is open to the adjacent lobby. For all intents and purposes, the space is a box with two voids (one being the window, the other being the opened north wall). For the purposes of this paper I will refer to the interviewee simply as LH. I asked LH a series of questions pertaining to the space, which became a conversation. Only after the interview ended did I reveal my purposes, and at no time during the interview did I sway or inflict my opinions on LH.

To start, I asked LH why he was there. He usually sits there to pass the time, and doesn't typically stay longer than five or ten minutes, and only once a week, if that. He likes having the connection to both the outdoors and to the building. Specifically, he likes that the space feels enclosed (I write "feels" here because two sides

are visually open). LH noted that in order for someone to notice him while he sits there, he/she would have to make a point to look into the space. He calls it a "cozy nook," but also proposes some changes: cushions for the hard wood benches, maybe some carpeting, so he could sit on the floor, a deeper dropped ceiling, and a lower parti-



Lawrence Hall, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

tion (between the lobby space) to make it feel more enclosed.

LH's comments are helpful to gain insight into perceptions of secret spaces. The result of the interview confirmed all the criteria for a secret space gathered previously: enclosed (to some degree), connection to larger space, and one where one seeks comfort or refuge. It was interesting to hear that he does not feel particularly connected to the space, because he does not spend enough time there.

This indicates that a secret space need not be one where the user feels a strong habitual connection to (like Camille and her tapestry loom). Even a waiting area could become a secret space.

Secret spaces are more than private rooms. They offer a certain kind of experience—a spatial knowledge—that private spaces cannot. While private spaces are described by their function, secret spaces are experiential. This experience varies from user to user; the connection made between the place and the user becomes a kind of secret in itself, with the user on the inside looking out. On the other hand, when a user of an adjacent larger space looks into a secret space, like the Monet painting, he or she creates a connection—a secret as well. To reiterate, the main criterion for a secret space is the tense adjacency of a vast, open area with the secret space. This is seen through the interview of the user of the lobby space—one can understand the user's interpretation of such a space when he/she is asked to articulate it. A secret space needs this adjacency of a larger, more expansive space. Through analysis, this paper has described and noted certain secret spatial relationships, but how do these directly affect human behavior? Do they create an understandable network, one that can be related to human use or architectural design? Where else does secrecy emerge in the built environment? Perhaps the unveiling of secret spaces will alter how many think about architecture and spatial experiences.

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THE CONFESSIONS OF HERCULINE BARBIN:

ADMINISTERING “TRUE SEX” IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

What is particular to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret.

(Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*)

The conditions of intelligibility from which we emerge and are recognized as human in society, are composed from a set of complex and culturally situated norms. These norms are despotic for those who fall outside of them. It is impermissible, dangerous and even criminal to fall outside of societal norms. These norms are preconditions of what it means

to be socially and legally recognized as human. The mystery of what lies beyond the limits of intelligibility holds our imagination and drives our discourses. These discourses seek to expunge the subject of their particularities and bring to the fore the innermost secrets of their identity. It is through discourses on “true sex” that we have deceived ourselves into believing we are capable of uncovering the most fundamental truths of our natures. Psychoanalysis, in particular, coupled with biology promises to reveal the secrets of our true sex, assuring us that these secrets contain the most authentic aspects of our identity. This “will to know,” constructs a totalizing dogma, which determines individuals by forcing them into sexual categories. Individuals who fall outside of these rigid gender and sexual binaries are especially vulnerable to over-determination. Over-determination obstructs individuals’ ability to construct their own identity because it reduces them to a set of pre-determined categories. According to Foucault, “Adelaide Herculine Barbin, or Alexina Barbin, or Abel Barbin, who is called either Alexina or Camille in his own text, was one of those unfortunate heroes of the quest of identity”(Foucault xii). Herculine Barbin was an intersex person who lived in France from 1832 until their suicide in 1868. In his memoirs, Barbin contemplates this insatiable “will to know” that so structured the events of his life.

In this essay I will argue that Barbin’s framework sets the scene for imperative questions of identity that would otherwise have remained un-elucidated. If we are to understand what it means to be human we must include perspectives from those who exist at the very limits of intelligibility. Barbin’s narrative, at the same time blissfully naïve and ominously melancholic provides us with more than just a framework to form complex questions concerning the

regulation of sexuality. Barbin's narrative opens a window into nineteenth century France from which we can examine how sexuality was structured and formed by pedagogical institutions, such as the medical profession, the church, and bourgeois society as a whole, the ways in which intolerance of particular sexualities is fused with acceptance and even encouragement of deviation from sexual norms within these same pedagogical institutions, and finally how heterosexual institutions dispel "irregular" subjectivities and bodies by forcing them into categories by means of diagnoses. (Wing 103). It is clear that Foucault owes aspects of his analysis in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* "The Will to Know" to Barbin's account of "the urge to know" (Barbin 8).

The desire to find the secret of her/his innate "true sex" permeates Barbin's memoir. This desire is found in both Barbin's narrative as s/he struggled to give an account of herself as a "hermaphrodite" in nineteenth century France, and the normalizing forces that displaced Barbin, ultimately lead to her/his suicide. Barbin's story illustrates the methods in which discourses and means of analysis; for example the priests confessional, the doctor's methods of examination and the surgeon's scalpel, seek to uncover the secrets of "true sex." Moreover, Barbin's story shows how individuals are left to make sense of the findings of these discourses. Barbin's memoirs expose the harms that are wrought from forcing individuals to mediate their personal identity through normative categories. Throughout her/his memoirs, Barbin returns to the question of "true sex." In Barbin's words, "From time to time my brow bent with the weight of a sadness that I could not overcome. A constant preoccupation had seized hold of my mind. I was devoured by the terrible unknown" (Barbin 34).

This grappling with the "unknown" indicates how Barbin struggled to make sense of his/her humanity in relation to the "known" biological conditions of humanness that s/he failed to meet. Within the convents where she grew up and the all girls' boarding school where she taught as an adult, femininity was the norm. Barbin's ungraceful physique, noticeable facial hair and lack of breasts contributed to her/his masculine appearance and placed her/him outside of these norms. Each time that Barbin looked into a mirror and recognized something that was considered nameless, freakish or between norms s/he was forced to question his/her status as human (Butler 96). It was in these moments that Barbin was positioned as "a specter of the freak against which and through which the norm installs itself" (Butler 69). Barbin's physicality exceeded the norms of intelligibility. This excess denied Barbin citizenship within a community. Barbin's body was the very site of her/his alienation. Barbin's body both incited speech and secrecy.

In the eighteenth century, before Barbin's time, bodies freely made a display of themselves, enjoying a sexual candor that ended when the Victorians began to constrict and regulate sex. Our will to know, to uncover and demystify sex, has led us to construct and accept a science of sexuality. According to Foucault, "The agencies of power are determined to speak about it, to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail" (Foucault 18) In other words mechanisms in the areas of religion, psychoanalysis economics, pedagogy, medicine and law "incite, extract, distribute, and internalize sexual verbosity." (Kurzweil 219) It was through this incitement to discourse that the sciences of sex took charge of sex. At the same time sex was made inappropriate to speak of, and confined to the bedroom or the

confessional, experts began to freely and openly discuss it. The presence of sex in discourse became ever more prevalent as the power over it increased, leading new sites of sexual pleasure to emerge from the very regimes that sought to control it (Kurzweil 219). The more people constructed means to restrict sex, the more sex became the topic of discussion and subject of inquiry. The secrets of sex were laid bare as they became medically and legally exposed. Perversion became codified; observations in hospitals, prisons, schools and homes regulated the boundaries of sexual pleasure for patients, inmates, teachers, students, parents and children. For Foucault, “these sites radiated discourse aimed at sex, intensifying people’s awareness of it as a constant danger, and this in turn created a further incentive to talk about it” (Foucault 31). Sex was a thing to be administered, it acted on bodies. Bodies did not reveal sex instead Doctors prescribed it to them. Sex “had to be taken in charge of by analytical discourses” (Foucault 24).

Herculin Barbin wrote her/his memoirs close to the time of his/her suicide, well after the time that her/his “true” identity had been medically discovered and legally established. However the narrative of the journals is ambiguous. Barbin’s confessional narrative is riddled with secrets and omissions. Names of people and places are changed, adding a layer of anonymity to the text. Barbin’s very sexual identity remains secret to the reader. The pronouns that Barbin uses to describe her/himself change throughout the memoir. Barbin offers us an intimate and detailed account of the events in his/her life, speaking candidly of topics that would today still be considered taboo. However, Barbin does not offer the reader the definitive language needed to prescribe a categorical sex to the narrative. It appears that Barbin did not identify with one definitive

sex. In Foucault’s words, “what she evokes in her past is the happy limbo of a non-identity, which was paradoxically protected by the life of those closed, narrow and intimate societies where one has the strange happiness, which is at the same time obligatory and forbidden, of being acquainted with only one sex” (Foucault xiii).

Barbin was raised as a girl, in line with her perceived birth sex. Barbin spent her/his youth in the homo-social spaces of convent schools. While in the convent school, Barbin entertained passionate affairs with her fellow classmates. Barbin would go to great lengths to elude the nuns. Secret caresses were shared in the shade of the convent’s garden and good night kisses were imparted on the lips of her/his young girlfriends while the heads of the nuns were bent in their evening prayer. Upon passing her/his qualifying exams Barbin became a teacher. It was in her/his appointment as a teacher at Madam P’s boarding school, that she/he met Sara. Sara was another young teacher at the boarding house. Madam P, both the head mistress and Sarah’s mother, encouraged the intimacy between the two young teachers. Madam P thought that the closeness of the faculty was important to the quality of education at her school. Barbin and Sarah spent most of their time together, sharing both a classroom and a bedroom. The relationship between the two teachers quickly evolved under the approving gaze of Madam P. The romantic relationship between Barbin and Sarah became a secret in plain sight. Madam P failed to detect the eroticism that developed between Sarah and Barbin, interpreting the lovers’ intimacy as a most pious partnership.

Throughout her/ his youth Barbin’s classmates, teachers and students displayed the same blissful naiveté to her indeterminate anatomy. In Foucault’s words, “nobody who looked at it was aware

of his somewhat awkward graceless body, which became more and more abnormal in the company of the girls in which he grew up”(Foucault xii) Instead “they were all alike as blind as characters in a Greek fable when, uncomprehendingly, they saw this puny Achilles hidden in their boarding school”(Foucault xiii) If Alexina’s body did not fool all of those around him or arouse suspicion, it was due to the power of the pious context that s/she lived in. Within the homo-social setting of the convent there is exists no language for conceptualizing sexual difference. Furthermore, within the heterosexual worldview, homo-social spaces such as boarding schools for girls are by definition devoid of eroticism. Heterosexual norms dictate that erotic relationships not exist between girls/women. In Barbin’s words, “As I was Sara’s intimate girlfriend, nobody was constrained in my presence; naturally, I was initiated into all those secret little details that are exchanged among persons of the same sex! !” (Barbin 73).

Confused by her secret relationship with Sarah, Barbin attempted to find solace in confession. However Barbin could not find comfort in religion. The priest was horrified by Barbin’s confessions. Given what he assumed the status of her/his soul to be, the priest determined that the only course of action would be to “withdrawal from the world and become a nun”(Barbin 62). The priest advised that Barbin keep her/his confessions a secret from the nuns, as they would not accept her if the truth were to come out. This judgment posited Barbin as someone unworthy of love and underserving of acceptance. Under Catholic doctrine, Barbin and Sara’s happiness was regarded as a most foul and unnatural sin. The priest’s denial of Barbin’s status as an intersex person preserved the sexual order of the time. Because only women are allowed to live in a convent,

the complexity of Barbin’s sex is reduced into a category of mere feminine appearance. Confining Barbin in a convent could have preserved the norm in spite of Barbin’s ambiguous appearance because within the homo-social setting of a convent nonconforming sexes and sexualities are rendered unintelligible. Convent life could not offer Barbin the vocabulary needed to form a sense of self because such a life would not be nuanced enough to recognize the particularities of Barbin’s identity. Curiously, in his advice it appears that the priest recognized that the law depends on gender performance, rather than material identity (Wing 118).

Throughout her/his life, Barbin was plagued with unexplained physical pains. Over the years these pains became more frequent and intense. At the insistence of Sara and Madam P, Barbin submitted to a medical examination. Little did s/he know that this consult would not provide any answers, instead it would perpetuate the mystery of Barbin’s condition, further relegating Barbin to the realm of the unintelligible. In Barbin’s words, “standing near my bed, the doctor considered me attentively, full of interest, while giving vent to muffled exclamations of this sort: “My God! Is it even possible? I understood by his gestures that he would have liked to prolong this examination until the truth sprang to light!!” (Barbin 68) The doctor’s reaction illustrates the threat posed by Barbin’s ambiguous sex organs to the normative order. Barbin’s difference represented a “threat to the symbolic construction of gender so severe” that it could not be brought into language (Wing 119). The doctor’s speechlessness was not merely a sign of his astonishment, but rather, evidence of his inability to speak of the difference in Barbin’s anatomy and sexuality. Barbin’s difference is therefore displaced from language itself (Wing 119). The doctor made an attempt to

warn Madam P about Barbin's status as an intersex person but his prognosis fell on deaf ears. In a state of shock and denial Madam P sent the doctor away. The doctor did not repeat his findings to anybody else, "terrified by the secret that he had come upon unexpectedly, [he] preferred to bury it forever" (Barbin 70). Given the doctor's silence and Madam P's denial, the details of the examination's findings became a secret that was carefully kept from Barbin.

As grave as the examination was, it did not disrupt the ordinary routine of the boardinghouse. Madam P preferred the illusion that denial provided her. To acknowledge the discrepancy between Barbin's gender performance, gender identity, sexuality and biological sex would have brought scandal into her home. However, there were moments when Madam P lost her indifference and heeded the doctor's warnings. Madam P forbade Barbin and Sara to sleep together and cautioned them against sharing caresses and kissing. This potential danger only brought Sara and Barbin closer together as they both reveled in the secrecy of their affair. For two uninterrupted years Barbin and Sarah would sneak into each other's bed at night and hide in empty classrooms to share passionate kisses. Escaping Madam P's attentive watch these intimate moments became their shared secret, making up what Barbin would come to call the happiest times of their lives.

In spite of her happiness with Sara, Barbin felt the need to discover her/himself "whatever the price may be" (Barbin 71). Barbin left the boarding house without a word to anyone in order better understand her/his embodied situation. I believe that it was Barbin's goal to make her/himself intelligible in light of her/his love for Sara. Because the pair were forbidden to exist as lesbians, or any other category outside of heterosexual norms, Barbin attempted to

mediate their relationship through these norms in seeking legal recognition as a male. Seeking counsel and protection, Barbin sought out Monseigneur de B, a highly respected bishop. Upon receiving the episcopal blessing, Barbin confessed to him. The bishop was sympathetic to Barbin's distressed narrative and confused situation. His response however was to speak for her/him, rather than to advocate on her/his behalf. This attitude is apparent in the language the bishop used to comfort Barbin, "will you authorize me to make use of your secrets? For, although I know what to think in regard to yourself, I cannot be a judge in such a matter. I shall see my doctor this very day. I will come to an understanding with him about what course of action to take" (Barbin, 77). Far from being transgressive, the bishop's actions reified the same norms which excluded Barbin. With these words, the bishop effectively removed all the power that Barbin had to construct a meaningful identity for her/himself. Barbin was subsequently referred to Doctor H for another set of examinations.

Doctor H was determined to uncover the truth of Barbin's condition. Taking it upon himself to correct the error of Barbin's sex, doctor H imagined that his methods would decipher the secrets of Barbin's body (Barbin 78). However he treated Barbin as an object rather than a person. The doctor pried into all aspects of Barbin's life and initiated himself into her/his "dearest secrets." (Barbin 78) Barbin was made to reveal both her/his body and mind to the doctor. The experience so negatively impacted Barbin that s/he could hardly bring her/himself to write about the experience. The only accounts of these examinations that Barbin offers the reader are descriptions of the doctors initial questioning:

Here you must regard me not only as a doctor but as a confes-

sor. I must not only see for myself, I must know everything you can tell me. This is a grave moment for you, more so than you might think, perhaps. I must be able to answer for you with complete assurance, before Monseigneur first of all, and also, no doubt, before the law which will appeal to my evidence (Barbin 78).

In being “answered for,” Barbin did not construct an identity of her/his own but was rather constructed. Doctor H striped away Barbin’s agency, making her/his identity not a way of being in the world but rather a prescription. It was these two men, a priest and a doctor, that prescribed the “truth” of her identity. Through these confessions and examinations it was determined that Barbin was spiritually and medically a man.

This diagnosis set into motion Barbin’s legal recognition as a man. A “ voluminous report, a masterpiece in the medical style” was prepared for these proceeding because only medical evidence would stand the scrutiny of the court (Barbin 87). Once instigated, the powers of recognition and signification were outside of Barbin’s control. Barbin had only to hand the doctor’s written medical opinion to a lawyer. Otherwise, Barbin was markedly absent from the court deliberation. This illustrates how the desires of the one body that mattered in these proceedings had no bearing on the court’s decision. The case was not initiated in the name of Barbin’s status as a person with desires. In actuality sexual norms were not being challenged by the court, they were being protected. In place of Barbin’s testimony the court had commissioned yet a third doctor to examine Barbin. This examination yielded the same results as those that had come before, resulting in Barbin’s legal signification as a man. Barbin was thusly entered into the records as belonging to the masculine

sex, and given a new name.

Barbin visited Madam P’s boarding school one last time in an attempt to alleviate the scandal that would ensure once the “truth” of her/his nature was revealed. Upon arrival no one could ignore the ramifications of Barbin’s new legal status as a man. Madam P. could no longer feign ignorance as to Barbin’s sex and Sara was forced to come to terms with fact that her relationship with Barbin could never be the same. Neither Madam P. nor Sara understood Barbin’s determination to begin a new life. Barbin chose to spare them the “brutal confessions/he shares with the reader in the last pages of her/his memoir” (Barbin,83). It was Barbin’s love for Sara that motivated her/his decision to seek legal recognition as a man. Barbin loved Sara too dearly to blame her for the unhappiness of their situation. Barbin had thought that as a man s/he would have been free to openly peruse a relationship with Sara. However Barbin’s abrupt transformation revealed her/him to the world in all the ways that offended the laws of conventional behavior (Wing 79). Society never forgave Barbin for transgressing the norms of behavior. Barbin was forced to leave the boarding school and make a new life for her/himself in Paris. Barbin’s final departure from the boarding house symbolized the end of her/his existence as a girl. In Barbin’s words, “As the carriage moved off, my beloved [Sara] faded out of sight. It was all over.” (Barbin 87)

Barbin began her/his new life utterly alone. Barbin’s existence as a man was miserable. Friendless and unemployed, Barbin moved from one wretched apartment to the next waiting for her/his life to actually begin. The longer Barbin spent in Paris the more s/he felt that death was near her/him. Devoid of a future death became the only outcome that was available to Barbin. Only in death could

Barbin “find a homeland, brothers, [and] friends” (Barbin 103). Religion and science had pushed Barbin to her/his limits and abandoned her/him. Unable to adapt to life under her/his new identify, Barbin committed suicide. The manuscript of her/his memoirs was found along with her/his body. In a sense Barbin left behind not one, but two texts. At the time of Barbin’s death her/his memoirs were considered to be of little significance. It was Barbin’s body that was analyzed and read by a succession of medical doctors. Barbin foreshadows the “discourse of the scalpel,” which is still felt today by intersex people. Barbin alludes to this discourse in the text:

When that day comes a few doctors will make a little stir around my corpse; they will shatter all the extinct mechanisms of its impulses, will draw new information from it, and will analyze all the mysterious sufferings that were heaped up on a single human being. O princes of science, enlightened chemists, whose names resound throughout the world, analyze then, if that is possible, all the sorrows that have burned, devoured this heart down to its last fibers; all the scalding tears have drowned it, squeeze it dry in their savage grasp! (Barbin 103)

Barbin understood the fascination that surrounded her/his body and the contempt that surrounded her/his humanity. Barbin’s memoir’s offer us a powerful cautionary tale of the harms of over-determining individuals through medical discourse, at the cost of their humanity. Barbin’s narrative illustrates to us the failings of religious, medical and legal discourses to uncover the secrets of identity. In order to engage in transgressive identify theory we must turn to memoirs and autobiographies. We must not seek to divulge the body in the name of science. We should instead read memoirs such as Barbin’s,

that challenge our normative ways of thinking in order to extend the limits of intelligibility.

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UNLOCKING LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Imagine that you are standing before a door. You jiggle the handle, but the door will not budge. Answers call out to you from the other side. But the door is locked. Answers will remain secrets, unless of course, you find the right key. Encryption, or the coding of a message, is another method of locking up secrets. Creators of encryptions must always keep in mind that the enemy knows the system. This phrase is implied in Kerchoff's principle,

which states that although the enemy knows the system, "he must still be unable to solve messages in it without knowing the specific key . . . secrecy must reside solely in the keys" (Kahn 236). Like standing before a locked door, or an enemy decoding an encryption, the reader of a novel cannot unlock its secrets without the correct keys. When applied to Ursula K. Le Guin's science fiction novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the concept of encryption can lead readers to find the "key," unlocking the novel's secret themes.

Although all literature conceals secrets in some form or another, science fiction codes in a unique way. This code or encryption is created in a way that "[does] not conceal the presence of a secret message but renders it unintelligible to outsiders by various transformations" (Kahn xiii). A code uses a common language or system with a twist that renders it difficult to solve. Science fiction uses the human mind's sense of imagination to play with common language in a way that turns it into an encryption. Margaret Atwood argues in *In Other Worlds* that if "you can image—or imagine— yourself, you can image—or imagine— a being not yourself; and you can also imagine how such a being may see the world, a world that includes you" (Atwood 21). By encountering characters that exist in other worlds, the reader finds it difficult to relate because he is placed in a foreign world of language. By expanding his imagination, and applying that to the language he reads, the reader can develop his own connections with the novel. Authors of science fiction are constrained by how much of this language they can manipulate while still allowing a basis for the reader to relate. John Pennington suggests that science fiction "plays the game of the impossible but by necessity uses common language and largely conventional narrative structures to describe an alien fiction world that the reader

can participate in” (Pennington 351). In other words, the reader is a participant, but he is also similar to the enemy. He observes an alien world as an outsider. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin’s protagonist, Genly Ai, is also an outsider. The novel works on two levels. First, on a character-based level, Genly must find the “keys” to unlock a deeper understanding of this alien planet he is on. On a narrative level, the reader must find the “keys” to unlock a deeper understanding of the secret themes that underlie the novel. In both cases, language opens the door.

The Left Hand of Darkness contains multiple doors for the reader to attempt to unlock. Le Guin leads the reader toward the key by setting up multiple narratives within the novel. Genly Ai begins the novel as a report. Although he is the primary driving force of the plot, multiple chapters are the accounts from the alien population, the Gethenians. These chapters are told through folk tales, historical reports, and scientific documents. Along the way, another major character, the Gethenian, Estraven, also speaks. These multiple narratives expand upon the Gethenian culture. John Pennington suggests that “[Le Guin’s] reader strives to piece the other narrative strands into some cohesive structure that aligns with the reader’s sense of identity found within the unity of the text” (Pennington 351). By finding unity, Pennington suggests that the reader is creating an identity. He is imagining himself as part of the text; therefore, the reader’s sense of language is manipulated. This manipulation occurs because Le Guin creates an alien world through common language that is strong enough to lead the reader into the novel. Yet she encrypts the reader by separating him from this alien culture by way of her protagonist.

Genly Ai is a human. He comes from a futuristic Earth where

the people have developed the ability of “mindspeech,” a type of telepathic language used to communicate with one another. Along with being able to communicate with people telepathically, this futuristic Earth communicates with planets in multiple galaxies. Earth has become part of an interplanetary collective called the “Ekumen” which Genly works for. This Ekumen as Margret Atwood puts it, is anthropological in nature, because they “go to distant shores, they look, they explore foreign societies and try to figure them out” (Atwood 121). The Ekumen send Genly to a planet known to them as Winter, in an attempt to convince the planet to join their collective. The novel begins with Genly’s first person narrative, in the form of an Ekumen report. He writes, “I’ll make my report as if I told a story, for I was taught as a child on my home world that Truth is a matter of the imagination . . . Facts are no more solid, coherent, round and real than pearls are. But both are sensitive” (Le Guin 1). Genly claims that “Truth” is a matter of imagination because as an outsider he does not understand the truths of this alien world. Like a reader who must extend his imagination to understand science fiction, Genly suggests that Truth is a malleable concept that can vary from world to world. Different people or species are sensitive to their own truths. He understands the general system or code of the alien species.

The alien species on Winter, the Gethenians, are unique. Although they are humanoid, they have no fixed gender. However, they can have sex during a phase of the month called Kemmer. As Carl Freedman observes in his introduction to *Conversations with Ursula K. Le Guin*, “to put it extremely crudely, [it is] as if human beings were cats or dogs, and we went into heat once a month, but in between heat, you’re asexual or nonsexual and in heat you can

go either male or female every time . . . Of course, what that means is that in the society in which those androgynes live, there are no sex-linked occupations since everybody can be male or female at any time (Freedman 9). Kemmer is this ability to go into heat, and develop a gender for a certain amount of time. Unaccustomed to Genly and the reader, this species, without their fixed gender, have developed a society without the gender roles. The seventh chapter in *The Left Hand of Darkness* is an excerpt from Ong Tot Oppong's field notes. She was an Ekumenical investigator, who while discussing the Gethenian's androgyny, states that, "A child has no psychosexual relationship to his mother and father. There is no myth of Oedipus on Winter. Consider: There is no unconsenting sex, no rape . . . There is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protective/protected, dominant/submissive, owner/chattel, active/passive" (Le Guin 100). There is no dichotomy between masculine and feminine traits. These traits are unified from person to person, depending on their possible cycle. Genly must deal with this unfamiliar culture.

Genly must learn to understand this unfamiliar culture, as well as find a way to lead this planet's nations into the Ekumen, developing their culture socially. Ong Tot Oppong goes on to discuss and wonder why there is no war on Winter, stating that "The weather of Winter is so relentless . . . that perhaps they use up their fighting spirit fighting the cold . . . Here man has a crueler enemy even than himself" (Le Guin 103). This section leads the reader to a realization that Winter is in a literal and figurative ice age. In this frozen world, culture does not develop at the rate that a world with permanent masculine and feminine traits develops. The Gethenians are frozen in their ways. As members of a culture without rapid an-

thropological development, they are resistant to change. However, Genly wishes to begin the process of leading the Gethenian's into a figurative spring, a social development that involves them with other countries. But Genly struggles with the Gethenians' resistance in regard to his job from the "Ekumen" as well as being accepted by the people. The majority of Gethenians consider Genly to be an outsider. Because Genly is a man, and therefore in the Gethenian's minds constantly in the state of kemmer, he is called a "pervert." This term denotes in the Gethenian language, "a male animal, not the pronoun for a human being in the masculine role of kemmer" (Le Guin 67). So, the Gethenians limit their understanding of Genly to that of a male animal. And the reader must try and interpret this term "pervert" in Le Guin's imagination sense, rather than the common connotation of the word. But, Genly's understanding, too, is limited by gender. He says, "I was still far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes. I tried to, but my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman" (Le Guin 12). When Genly observes this alien species, he cannot help but assign a sense of masculinity to them, because it is easier for him to assume they have a fixed gender. Neither Genly nor the Gethenians can relate to each other on a basis beyond that of their gender or gender limitations and therefore physical form affects the efficiency of language.

One Gethenian, Estraven, breaks this barrier of understanding. Estraven is a unique, complicated character. Estraven is the prime minister to the nation Karhide. And although he supports the king, his ties to Karhide differ from what most Gethenian's would consider normal, because he wants to develop the nation. Therefore, he supports Genly and attempts to help him persuade the Geth-

enians to join the Ekuman. In our first introduction to Estraven, he helps Genly by telling him how to communicate with Karhide's king, who is going mad. But Genly struggles to imagine Estraven as both a man and a woman and therefore, cannot gain a solid grasp of Estraven's character. He wonders, "Was it in the fact perhaps this soft supple femininity that I disliked and distrusted in him?" (Le Guin 13). Estraven's physical androgyny effects Genly's basic understanding of him and his ability to communicate. Because Estraven's body is physically unreadable, his words are also lost on Genly. Genly says that he "imagined [Estraven] moving me around the other pawns in his own game" (Le Guin 17). When Estraven speaks, Genly assumes that Estraven is being manipulative with his words, when in fact, Genly is misconstruing the situation. Genly is lost in the encryption of this alien society that lacks permanent gender roles. His inability to clearly communicate leaves him trapped. He is stuck before the door.

Genly and Estraven's failed conversation reveals tension between the characters. However, the "enemy" getting lost in the encryption is also the reader. This is the tension felt by the reader on the level of the narrative. The reader is also stuck before the door. Just as Genly is unable to decrypt Estraven's advice, and find an understanding of the Gethenian people, the reader is lost in the imagination. If the use of imagination to challenge common language is the key in this science fiction narrative, then comprehending that imaginative language presents the reader with a challenge. Particularly, Le Guin's novel uses the pronoun "he" to describe the Gethenians. Carl Freedman, in another observation of Le Guin's work, suggests "[Le Guin] has used a quite traditional grammatical structure which, in English, is strictly divided along masculine-fem-

inine lines. Reluctant to invent a new pronoun . . . (it would drive the reader mad, she claimed), she preferred to use the masculine pronoun, which, in many ways, negated the main idea of the book (Freedman 73). Freedman argues Le Guin's use of the male pronoun "he" negates the idea of genderlessness in the novel. Because the English language requires gendered subjects, that language cannot help but portray the Gethenians as masculine. The reader of this essay, and of Le Guin's novel, must be addressed as "he" or she." To emphasize this linguistic challenge, "the reader" of this essay will from this point on be referred to as female.

Using "he" or even "she" is an encryption for the reader. She must stretch her imagination and adapt to a different connection of the pronoun, a truth that is created in the text. Gender itself becomes a language tool, where the reader must access the importance of gender in her own life, and in language itself. In his article regarding the prevalence of androgyny in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, N.B. Hayles suggests the novel "offers a way to admit the ambivalence of androgyny and, at the same time, transcend it" (Hayles 100). By openly discussing the Gethenian's lack of a fixed gender, Hayles argues that *The Left Hand of Darkness* reveals the sense of androgyny, causes them to question it, and leads them to new conclusion about it. Through the problem of gendered pronouns, the novel causes the reader to question the stability of gender. And therefore, the reader comes to new conclusion about what gender means to them. The reader discovers her own keys and finds her own answers in the plot as she uses her own imagination to create her own connotations of language.

Genly's journey to discover keys on the level of character is a challenge. He searches deeply for answers to understanding the

Gethenians. It is not as simple as a matter of adjusting to pronouns, because the encryption is more difficult and confusing. Let it be noted that the encryption on the level of character focuses on balancing elements of unity and separation. Genly's name, for example, balances these elements. Though he is a man, "Genly" sounds like the word "gentle," commonly associated with femininity. As a nod to androgyny, this works to show that although the Gethenian's do not consider Genly gentle (after all, he is a "pervert"), the barriers between them may not be as big as they appear. Also, the Gethenian's cannot pronounce Genly's name correctly. They refer to him as "Genry," a quality of oneness that adds to his level of separation and reaffirms his "enemy" status. In fact, Genly's enemy status grows throughout the plot, although he considers himself a key. He says that, "I was, it seemed, a key. What door was I to unlock?" (Le Guin 128). Genly believes he is going to unlock "the spring" to advance these this planet's nations, but both only come to distrust him further. After leaving Karhide, he is thrown into prison on the neighboring nation of Orgoreyn.

And on that note, let us return to discussing Estraven and his motivation. As a complex character, Estraven's role in relation to Genly is tricky. Estraven falls out of favor with Karhide's King, because that king's madness intensifies after a miscarriage, resulting in an extreme lack of trust that leads his nation to the brink of war with Orgoreyn for the first time in the planet's history. This unwilling "spring" may be the social development growing from the Gethenians, leading to extreme hardships. Estraven is exiled from Karhide, and comes to Orgoreyn to look for Genly. After finding him in prison, he risks his life to save Genly and return to him to Karhide. He does so because Estraven wishes to help advance his

planet winter into a "spring," without using war. And he believes Genly will be able to help the nation of Karhide to do just that. Genly is not able to understand Estraven's sense of loyalty. After saving Genly from prison, the two descend upon an isolated thousand mile ice-sheet. They take this walk to return Genly back to Karhide in secret. But during this long journey, the two become closer.

One scene in particular focuses on the unity and separation these two can only feel through language. As Bernard Serlinger points out, "The drive toward unity and oneness characterizes the novel. . . this drive or illusion in LHD is always deconstructed by the separation motif" (Selinger 72) In order to understand the unity that develops in this novel, the oneness that Genly can find beyond the door, must be deconstructed through a form of separation. This comes in the form of a poem. Genly and Estraven are sitting in their tent one evening, alone upon the ice-sheet. In this pivotal scene, the door to Genly's understanding is opened, and the encryption itself becomes decoded. To observe this scene correctly, let us first decode the poem that Estraven tells Genly one evening as they sit together. He recites,

Light is the left hand of darkness and darkness the right hand of light. Two are one, life and death, lying together like lovers in kemmer, like hands joined together, like the end the way (Le Guin 252).

This poem sums up the Gethenian culture. First off, the poem suggests that light and darkness are unified. They are connected in a sense of duality, like the Gethenian gender cycle. "Two are one" suggests that you cannot have light without darkness. As light and darkness are like lovers in a state of kemmer, and they will be that way as they descend into the future, "like the end the way." With

this idea of duality, the connection of unity and separation, we can correctly observe what follows in the scene because it is shown through both Estraven and Genly's perspectives.

Looking at Estraven's perspective, we must observe that the fact that he is in the period of Kemmer. After Estraven recites this poem, he begins to question Genly about what these fixed genders are like on Earth. And although he is not wholly female in this moment, he leans that way because of Genly's masculine presence. The conversation is strained. Genly responds with, "I can't tell you what women are like. I never thought about it much in the abstract, you know . . . In a sense women are more alien to me than you are. With you I share one sex, anyhow" (Le Guin 253). The unity in having a shared sex as well as the separation of being completely opposite in the other effects these character's body language. Estraven confirms this in his narration, saying that, "[Genly] looked away and laughed, rueful and uneasy. My own feelings were complex, and we let the matter drop" (Le Guin 253). There is sexual tension occurring between them, which is only addressed through their moments of conversation. The language they use strains Estraven's feeling in Kemmer. But as said in Estraven's narration, the two simply let the matter drop. The reader is lost here, what is exactly is the "matter" that occurred between them, from a perspective she can understand?

Genly's perspective comes in handy here. There is a connection between the tension of body language and dialogue that extends Genly's understanding. In his interpretation, Genly observes Estraven, saying "I saw . . . what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man . . . For us to meet sexually would be for us to meet once more

as aliens. We had touched, in the only way we could touch. We left it at that. I do not know if we were right" (Le Guin 266-267). In this moment Genly, is finally able to see Estraven as being stimulatingly a man and a woman. And although Estraven is in Kemmer, the two do not have sex. Genly is able to touch Estraven through his use of language. To touch physically would only result in more separation between them. This seeming union is actually a separation is the true cause of their exile. Because Estraven is unlike the other Gethenians and Genly unlike the species as a whole, the two can come to an understanding and unity of their "enemy" status, and thus unlock their own doors. Genly finds his own answers, his own interpretation of Estraven that breaks the barriers between what gender means, because of the keys in their dialogue.

Yet, the answers behind the door, once the keys are discovered, may not be as expected. As you open the door, darkness may lie beyond. This opened door is comparable to Genly's ability to Mindspeech. This medium of mental communication had previously been blocked between him and the Gethenians. Yet after Genly decodes Estraven, he is able to communicate with him through this medium. The results are unsettling. As Genly mindspeaks with Estraven he notes that "perhaps [as] a Gethenian, being singularly complete, feels telepathic speech as a violation of completeness, a breach of integrity hard for him to tolerate . . . so that intimacy of mind stabled between us was a bond, indeed, but an obscure and austere one, not so much admitting further light (as I had expected it to) as showing the extent of darkness" (Le Guin 273-274). As the two communicate through telepathic speech, Estraven is disturbed by it. The voice he hears of Genly is distorted, and the words cause him pain and sadness. As Bernard Serlinger states, "It becomes

quite apparent that Genly Ai's experience on the planet has to do with boundaries and barriers" (Selinger 53). Selinger argues that through boundaries and barriers Genly develops his character. But this also reveals on the level of the character that creating "spring", breaking through boundaries and barriers, develops the characters inner selves by confronting both light and darkness, as they walk hand in hand. This occurs on the level of the reader, as she learns to use her own imagination to recreate the meaning of words on the page.

The moment the reader understands, she loses her original answer. As Estraven says in his journal, "to learn which questions are unanswerable, and not to answer them: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness" (Le Guin 164). By stepping away from the door, you, the reader, leave both light and darkness, letting it go. Yet, if you unlock it, you become part of a created truth, an imagined truth. And here, you confront the light and darkness that lies beyond. As Genly understand Estraven, he loses his understanding of what gender meant to him. But he gains an imagined truth about duality, about how connections, and even love, draws in both light and darkness. The reader finds herself (and himself) re-imagining the connotations of language. This language creates the encryption as well as giving the reader the means to solve it, providing both the locked door and the key in a unified and separated duality. What is an answer, and what is a secret, may simply be a manipulation of words.

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ESTHA ALONE:

DERRIDA IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY

Critics often praise Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel, *The God of Small Things*, for its poetic prose. The novel's creative use of language, grammar, and allusions to Western pop culture also constitute a large part of its appeal. While these qualities can easily be written off as simply clever or witty devices, perhaps there is more at stake for this novel written by an Indian woman that so heavily employs Western allusions to, among other things,

Elvis Presley, Popeye the Sailor, and *The Sound of Music*. The allusions are constantly developing; each reference is a slight perversion of the last. Thus Roy seems to be toying with the reader, requiring not only that they be westernized enough to recognize the allusions, but diligent enough to track their changes in the novel. Considering the employment of Western pop culture in a novel set in India, and written by an Indian woman, should Roy then be categorized as an author of postcolonial literature, with postcolonial here meaning the literature written in English from a formerly colonized space? Does this play with Western pop culture posit that Roy, as an Indian woman, is therefore dependent on the West for inspiration? I take issue with the idea that postcolonial literature must always be writing back to the West in a way which implies dependence. I will employ Jacques Derrida's theories of deconstruction to explore the deterioration and pushing back of meaning as seen in the character Estha, a young boy who is molested, and subsequently loses any real sense of identity. By examining postcolonialism in the context of India, my paper will explore the value the novel places on an embodied, westernized reader to discover its secrets. The play with culture in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has the power to create rules and to push back meaning, which ultimately culminates into a secret experience between the reader and the novel. Through this experience, my paper will confront issues of whether postcolonial literature is always already "writing back."

Roy's creative writing style continuously makes use of epithet-like phrases to describe characters. An epithet is a description, word, or phrase that appears with a name so often that it becomes a part of that identity. Although Roy's novel encompasses many intertwined stories, at its center are Estha, a young boy, and Rahel,

his fraternal twin sister. The narrative is nonlinear, but most of the plot occurs in 1969, when the twins are eight years old. Seemingly insignificant features repeat and repeat in these “epithets” until they become defining characteristics for the twins. Several characteristics become associated with Estha, including his shoes, his love of Elvis, and his Elvis-like pompadour: “Estha was wearing his beige and pointy shoes and his Elvis puff. His Special Outing Puff. His favorite Elvis song was ‘Party’... Estha had slanting, sleeping eyes and his new front teeth were still uneven on the ends” (Roy, 37). As certain features, like his pompadour “puff,” his love of Elvis, and his shoes are constantly repeated, the allusions build on each other. The epithets function as a way to track the changes in his character, and the changing epithets often follow changes in the plot. Each repetition of an epithet is a slight perversion of the last, requiring a vigilant reader to track them in order to understand Estha’s ever changing identity. At stake in the novel is a reader that must be able to follow Estha’s epithets, engaging in an embodied practice of reading.

The notion of an embodied reading practice is essential to my analysis of *The God of Small Things*. I use this term to describe a method of reading in which the westernized reader recognizes the allusions being made to Western pop culture and understands the importance of these allusions within the novel. Often times, the novel will allude quite obviously to an aspect of Western pop culture, and afterwards slight perversions of this allusion will appear, but without explanation. For example, in the beginning, the novel states that Estha’s hair is in an “Elvis puff.” This clearly references Elvis Presley, and any reader can see this. However, a westernized embodied reader would access prior knowledge from outside the novel to realize that Elvis himself had a pompadour hairstyle and

would now understand the word “puff” to represent Estha’s emulation of Elvis’s hairstyle. Each subsequent time the word “puff” appears in the novel, it retains this meaning for the reader, even if the novel never directly names the hairstyle an “Elvis puff” again. It is important to note that the word “puff” would not have this meaning outside of the novel. The novel imbues the word with meaning, in such a way that a reader would not be able to start in the middle of the novel, having missed the first “Elvis puff,” and still understand that word’s special meaning.

What differentiates an embodied reader from a simply active reader is his or her cognitive accessing of prior knowledge. The embodied reader internalizes the references within the novel to access information outside of the novel, and then brings that knowledge back to the reading of the novel. This cycle, of identification, information access, and subsequent recognition, is what I am defining as embodied, and this cycle creates a special meaning within a novel that is dependent on such a cycle. An active reader would recognize that the word “puff” is repeating and would follow its progression, but an embodied reader will also recognize the cultural significance of an “Elvis puff,” and bring this knowledge to their reading of the novel. This creates a secret between the novel and the embodied reader, a secret which they have to maintain throughout reading the novel, and with each consequent “puff.”

Throughout my paper I will be tracking the way that the novel both characterizes Estha’s identity and continually defers this characterization. Considering its use of English and its references to almost solely Western pop culture, the novel was written for a westernized reader, or at least with a westernized readership in mind. Therefore, one might think defining identity in terms of the Western tradition,

which values the individual. This sense of identity is “characterized by the increasing trend...toward secularization and individuation” (Rindfleish, 65). Here, I also find it useful to mention concepts of the subject and object as outlined in Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Estha would be defined as “Estha” because he is not Rahel, and that they provide this distinction for each other. However, even this simple distinction cannot be made, producing Roy’s first disruption of the Western practice which assumes the stability of an individual’s identity. The novel states:

“In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends, and Everything was Forever, Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities” (Roy, 5).

This appears as the novel’s first description of the twins, so the reader is instantly confronted with the idea of unstable identity. What I mean by unstable identity is the idea that Estha is not secure in his identity as an individual. Rather, he is defined by the presence or absence of his twin sister. The joint identities of Estha and Rahel become important in the novel because of what happens to Estha when Rahel is not present. This brings about his new identity, coined “Estha Alone.”

Without his twin sister, the novel defines Estha as “Estha Alone.” The reader first sees this when the family goes to see *The Sound of Music* at the theater. When taking a trip to the bathroom, the only male in a family of women, Estha must go to the men’s room alone: “[Rahel] tuned to wave across the slipperoiily marble floor at Estha Alone (with a comb), in his beige and pointy shoes.

Estha waited in the dirty marble lobby with the lonely, watching mirrors till the red door took his sister away” (Roy, 90). This passage exemplifies many of Roy’s trademark uses of language in *The God of Small Things*. While “slipperoiily” is not a correct English word, it is an accurate and visceral description that can be easily pictured, and is among countless instances in the novel of such made-up words. There is also Roy’s employment of parentheses, used quite often throughout the novel. The phrase “Estha Alone (with a comb)” creates a rhyme, which produces a childlike tone in the narrative, one that is often contrasted with the horrors of the plot. Now that “Estha Alone” has been coined, the reader finds it again and again in the novel. Just three pages later there is, “Estha Alone of the uneven teeth” which brings back the detail of his teeth for the first time in almost sixty pages; the reader must catch these allusions to previous passages in order for many of the epithets to make sense (Roy, 93).

In addition to “Estha Alone,” Estha gains the identity of “Little Man.” This is a perversion of an allusion to a Popeye the Sailor song that Rahel sings in the lobby of the theater:

“I’m Popeye the sailor man dum dum
I live in a cara-van dum dum
I op-en the door
And fall on the floor

I’m Popeye the sailor man dum dum” (Roy, 94).

The following passage, as they are entering the theater for *The Sound of Music*, reads, “Estha had the tickets. Little Man. He lived in a caravan. Dum dum” (Roy, 94). Although the phrase “Little Man” never appears in the actual Popeye song, the reader still understands it as an allusion to Popeye. Here, Roy borrows the sound quality and rhythm of the Popeye song to create an epithet for Estha. Just like

“sailor man” and “caravan,” “Little Man” has three syllables, with a stress on the first syllable. So although it is not a part of the song’s original lyrics, by placing it amongst the rest of the lyrics, Roy solidifies “Little Man” as an epithet for Estha which the reader sonically understands as a part of the Popeye song.

Finally, once he enters the theater, all of Estha’s identities and Western pop culture references collide. The film begins, and Estha sings along to the songs in the film, annoying the other patrons: “It was Estha who was singing. A nun with a puff. An Elvis Pelvis Nun... The Audience was a Big Man. Estha was a Little Man, with the tickets” (Roy, 96). This passage contains allusions to *The Sound of Music* because he is compared to the nuns on screen, who are singing just as he is singing, and the embodied reader must access prior knowledge to recognize that *The Sound of Music* contains singing nuns. There are the allusions to Elvis in which the embodied reader must access prior knowledge to recognize that Elvis was famous for his hippy dance moves. And, finally, there is the reference to “Little Man,” or Popeye. This passage also contains the detail of Estha having the tickets, which had been mentioned previously. Singing along to the film, an act which upsets the “Big Man,” gets Estha sent to the lobby until he can control himself, and this is where the epithet “Estha Alone” becomes the most significant.

In the lobby, Estha is molested by the man running the candy counter. After a short conversation with the “Orangedrink Lemondrink Man,” Estha “got a cold bottle and a straw. So he held a bottle in one hand and a penis in the other. Hard, hot, veiny. Not a moonbeam” (Roy, 98). This molestation comes without warning. The reader is not expecting this act of violence which is punctuated by the two quick fragments which follow: “hard, hot, veiny” adds

to the sense of sexual violence, but it is “not a moonbeam” which requires the reader’s diligence, an especially difficult task after the molestation of an eight year old boy who has just been described as a “nun with a puff.”

The phrase “not a moonbeam” functions in two ways. Firstly it brings the reader back to the plot. Estha has been sent to the lobby for singing the nuns’ song, “Maria,” too loudly, which has the refrain: “Oh, how do you solve a problem like Maria? How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?” (Rodgers). Roy’s other allusions build on each other. The reader must recognize where each piece is coming from, but Estha’s epithets are repeated so frequently that they gain a special meaning, as seen in this passage after his molestation: “Estha Alone walked weavily to the bathroom. He vomited a clear, bitter, lemony, sparkling, fizzy liquid. The acrid aftertaste of a Little Man’s first encounter with Fear. Dum dum” (Roy 113). An attentive reader knows “Estha Alone,” “Little Man,” and now recognizes the “dum dum” from the Popeye song as a signifier of fear, which is then built on and used throughout the novel. However, Roy does not explain that “not a moonbeam” is a reference to a song in *The Sound of Music*, relying on an extremely observant reader, a westernized embodied reader, who would recognize this song’s lyrics out of context. One listens to songs, and while this implies that one might memorize the song’s lyrics, this is a different experience than reading words on a page, especially out of context, since the novel does not present them as lyrics. However, this is the embodied reading practice that Roy tasks the reader with, as all of the allusions made to Western pop culture change form in the novel. This embodied reading practice creates a secret for the embodied reader. Because of his or her knowledge of the lyric, he or she can more fully ap-

preciate this sad comparison: a penis and a moonbeam are not the same to hold. While this may still read as an emotional, if not slightly strange, line for the uninformed reader, he or she is not let in on Roy's secret, and for a book that is characterized by its obvious repetitiveness, I find Roy's slyness significant. Here is the major turning point for the novel, the point where Estha begins to go mad, the point where he is all alone, except for the reader who shares the secret of his molestation, and at this pivotal moment there is a reference to a song lyric pertinent to the plot which remains completely unexplained.

This slyness brings me to question Roy's status as a postcolonial author and the issue at the crux of my paper, the concept of "writing back." This is a loaded term in postcolonial theory which "[grants] postcolonial authors agency to resist and correct the myths propagated through literature upon which colonial relationships have been premised" (Templeton). A simple reading of this novel might assume that Roy, as an Indian woman born the 1960's who speaks and writes in English, employs these Western allusions to combat some sort of identity crisis about what it means to be Indian in an India that has exposure to Western pop culture, and that she is reclaiming these allusions in some way through her writing. The cleverly named *The Empire Writes Back* defines postcolonial literature as literature that has "emerged in [its] present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted [itself] by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing [its] differences from the assumptions of the imperial center" (Ashcroft, 2). It could be said that Roy's frequent use of made-up words and her perversions of Western pop culture are a way of asserting herself as different from the imperial center and that this assertion is a way of

"writing back" to such a power. In a way, this resistance to proper English could be seen as empowering.

However, implied in the concept of writing back is that this process is inescapable. *The Empire Writes Back* goes on to explain that "this literature is therefore always written out of the tension" and that this tension "demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the center and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" [emphasis added] (Ashcroft 38, 39). This reading of Roy assumes that she re-appropriates Western pop culture, and plays with language, grammar, and spelling in a clever way, because she is Indian and is therefore reliant on the "empire" for inspiration. While I do not claim to know Roy's source of inspiration, I do find the "writing back" method of analysis to be an oversimplification that is perhaps condescending. Surely there is more at stake for this poetic, violent, clever novel than the subversion of proper grammar.

Considering Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction provides a clearer picture. Because he told the "Orangedrink Lemon-drink Man" where he lived, politely when asked, Estha begins to panic when he returns home from *The Sound of Music*. But he then seemingly comes up with a solution: "he thought Two Thoughts, and the Two Thoughts he thought were these:

- (a) Anything can happen to Anyone.
- and
- (b) It's best to be prepared" (Roy, 186).

At this point in the novel, Estha begins to spend the majority of his time gathering supplies to transfer to a house across the river, presumably to create a safe spot away from the "Orangedrink Lemon-drink Man," although the reason behind the gathering of supplies is,

not coincidentally, never clearly stated. Estha, whenever questioned about the reason for his supply gathering, delays the answer. Estha constantly defers the meaning behind his actions by never revealing his intentions. He always replies that he must “prepare to prepare to be prepared” but he never clarifies what it is he is preparing for (Roy, 194). This is a particularly interesting response in the context of Jacques Derrida’s theory of deconstruction which “expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a spacing and temporalizing that puts off until “later” what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible” (Derrida, 129). Estha is preparing to prepare to be prepared. There is no explanation of why this preparation exists, except to perpetuate more preparation. Estha already has an unstable identity. His epithets, while all similar, change slightly each time they are presented to the reader, and change following new developments in his character. Now with the deference of the meaning behind his needing to be prepared, Estha seemingly has no identity beyond his preparation.

Estha’s need for preparation, his relationship with his twin sister, and his ever changing epithets all culminate into a deference of identity. One of the novel’s defining characteristics is its repetition, which can be seen most clearly in Estha’s epithets. The details of his uneven teeth, his puff, his shoes, his love of Elvis, his love of *The Sound of Music*, his possession of the theater tickets, and his identities as “Estha Alone” and “Little Man” all repeat, and with such frequency that the attentive reader is able to recognize any of these characteristics and understand them as representations of Estha. This creates a secret between the reader and the novel, as well as the secret unspoken rule that a reference to any of these allusions is also a representation of Estha. However, “in this play of representa-

tion, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin” (Derrida, 49). Therefore, perhaps Estha’s whole identity is a representation. He cannot exist as simply “Estha;” he is always a mix of allusions, representations, and the presence or absence of his sister, and these things are constantly evolving and repeating. As Derrida states:

“the possibility of [ideality’s] repetition, does not exist in the world...it depends entirely on the possibility of acts of repetition. It is constituted by this possibility. Its “being” is proportionate to the power of repetition; absolute ideality is the correlate of a possibility of indefinite repetition” [second emphasis added] (Derrida, 52).

I take this to mean that ideality, that which is ideal and does not exist in reality, is constituted by constant repetition. An Estha without an epithet and who is still just “Estha,” even when his sister is absent can only exist as an idea, and he is characterized in this way through his repeating epithets.

Noticing Estha’s deference of identity becomes a way for the reader to understand Roy’s identity as an Indian author. The novel relies on an embodied reader to follow the progression (or perhaps degradation) of Estha’s identity. An understanding of Estha’s identity also relies on the allusions to Western pop culture such as *The Sound of Music*, Elvis Presley, and Popeye the Sailor. The postcolonial idea of “writing back” provides a reading of the novel as an attempt to subvert the “empire,” which can be seen as empowering, but it also perpetuates the empire’s power by inferring that a postcolonial author is dependent on the West, in this case Western pop culture, for

inspiration. This only serves to reinforce the ideology which “writing back” supposedly subverts. I take issue with the implication that an Indian woman like Arundhati Roy must always already be writing back. I would like to reframe the idea of writing back in this novel as writing back to the reading practice that assumes a stability of identity.

The novel is playing games with the westernized reader. Roy, an Indian woman who speaks several languages, chose to write in English and employed countless allusions to Western pop culture. In this way, the novel caters to a westernized readership. The westernized reader is then looking for things that the Western tradition already assumes, such as the stability of identity, but never finds it, as it is constantly deferred. As *The Empire Writes Back* states, “Language becomes the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established” (Ashcroft, 7). However, Roy’s use of language rejects Western conceptions of truth, order, and reality. The reader then becomes reliant on the novel for rules and guidance. The embodied reader is reliant on the novel’s creation of meaning for certain words, like “puff” and “Little Man.” There develops a secret relationship between the reader and the novel in which the reader must be attentive to shifts in things that are normally assumed to be stable, like language, grammar, the Hegelian sense of identity, and Western concepts of individuality. The words on the page hold the secret of the novel. While there is certainly a great tension in this novel between India and the West, Roy subverts a method of writing back which implies her dependence on a colonial power. As a result, the westernized reader becomes completely dependent on Roy for instructions as to how to read her novel. And the reader never quite gets an answer. Just like Estha, the reader is

constantly preparing to understand, constantly preparing to finally feel stable in the novel, constantly preparing to be let in on the secret, but perhaps the secret is that the idea of a postcolonial identity can never afford to be stable.

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Mentor: **Chet Lisiecki**

PERSONAL POLITICS

AS EXPERIENCED BY MINA LOY AND THE GRRRLS OF BIKINI KILL

Some people think little girls should be seen and not heard

But I think

Oh Bondage Up Yours!

(X-Ray Spex, 1977)

The internal conflicts expressed in Mina Loy's poetic cycle "Songs to Joannes" (1917) and in her *Feminist Manifesto* (1914) anticipate problems that surface in second and third wave feminism, namely those concerning the idea that the personal is political. These problems are laid out in terms of a woman's challenge to achieve equality while finding ful-

fillment in romance and in feminine expression (in her manifesto, Loy refers to this as the false binary of "the mistress & the mother"). About seventy years later the Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill addressed this dichotomy through their music and in their zines (self-produced magazines). The idea of the personal as political assumes that politics are not isolated to legislation, but that systematic oppression operates through the politics of personal interactions as well. Therefore, equality can only be achieved when it is re-enforced by the social norms that govern personal interactions. In order to read feminist work (acknowledging the personal as political), we must acknowledge the importance of the differences between personal and public mediums of expression, such as the difference in creative space between Loy's manifesto and her poetry. I argue that the performative and participatory aspects of Riot Grrrl allowed Bikini Kill to embody the inseparability of women's politics from their personal lives—something Loy acknowledged on paper, but that her historical period would keep her from ever actualizing.

Loy's *Feminist Manifesto* provides insight into her radical, yet nuanced, feminism, thereby providing a lens by which to read her poetry. The two act as supplements to one another, in that the manifesto lays out her politics, and the poetry provides a more ambiguous medium in which the complications of living these politics is expressed. Loy's first wave feminist contemporaries ignored the poignantly philosophical politics she expressed in her manifesto. Too concerned with legislated inequalities, they were fighting for changes within a system that would remain inherently male-centric, whether or not women were given the right to vote. It was still a man's vote to give, or to extend to women. This power structure sets up an inevitable dichotomy in which a woman's liberation is

almost always at odds with her romantic relationships (Loy focuses on heterosexual relations). The question Loy explores, in both her poetry and manifesto, is whether or not one can live life as a fulfilled feminist and a fulfilled woman. These are not necessarily one in the same, when one is born into a social system that continually defines women as being less than. Self-aware of the confusion that could come along with her multi-faceted perspective, she told her friend and literary critic Carl Van Vechten that she felt feminine politics, “in a cosmic way that may not fit in anywhere” (187 Burke). It was these “cosmic” politics that surface in her poetry—a self-conscious incongruity of identity between the “mistress & the mother”, two coexisting sides of Loy that could never surface simultaneously.

In her manifesto, Loy presents the ways in which women’s oppression is rooted in their sexualities. She was once quoted as saying, she knew, “nothing about anything but life—& that is generally reducible to sex” (Burke 191). Loy places sex at the forefront, looking at the ways in which the moralization of sex functions to subjugate women. It is the duty of women to reject society’s moralization of sex, in order to bring about “absolute demolition” to patriarchal structures (Loy 153). Her call to destroy the system, rather than work within it to bring about change, differentiated Loy from her first wave feminist contemporaries. Aware of the radical nature of her politics, she acknowledged the complications that arose when true equality is fought for. Loy knew there must be personal sacrifices made towards ideas of romantic love in order for equality beyond the legislative scope to ever be realized. It is a woman’s challenge to find mutually equitable love with a man while functioning within a society that is structured in a way that divides the partners participating in loving relationships into the role of the subject, and

that of the object.

In her *Feminist Manifesto* (1914), Loy presents the way in which women are oppressed through the patriarchal formation of a subject-object dynamic between women and men. Loy defines “othering” in its most basic sense—as the act of recognizing one’s place in the world through identifying and recognizing what one is not. Othering is a political act in that it allows one to assert superiority over another through consciousness of difference. This idea is inherent to her explanation of dominant social structures, in which male is the norm, and female is the other. Woman is not man; therefore the lens that larger society looks through is that of the man. He sees woman as different from himself, and therefore establishes his place in the world by recognizing how she is different from him, therein defining what he is. In doing this, he must recognize the woman as an object, through which he situates himself in the world, rather than as another human being, which consequently directs the relationship towards the subject object dynamic. “The value of man is assessed entirely according to his use or interest to the community, the value of woman, depends entirely on chance”—hopefully a woman will be lucky enough to strike the interest of a man (Loy 155).

If man is the image, and woman the negative image, woman’s existence lies entirely on man’s composition. Loy explains how women are then challenged to battle the “theoretical valuation of their sex as relative impersonality,” or rather, to define what they are, instead of what they are not (Loy 154). The relativity Loy talks about is subjectivity of a woman being given worth—her definition is dependent on the man comparing himself to her, rather than any intrinsic characteristic. The standard is male, and in not being

male, women are deemed inferior by patriarchal standards. In this system women are diminished to isolated qualities, never functioning as agents. Consequently they remain unengaged with their full femininity. Loy's femininity is not the hegemonic ideal of the passive housewife. She defines femininity as a quality in which the identities of "the mistress, & the mother" do not operate independently of one another (154 Loy). This was Loy's take on the "New Woman" and her emerging social roles. Instead of compartmentalizing female sexuality, defining it as immoral, and setting it aside from the self, Loy argues women ought to embrace sexuality as an integral part of themselves. I argue that this is much stronger an expansion of social roles than the average "New Woman" was fighting for. Loy would not settle for simply being allowed in the work place, she wanted full and blatant sexual liberation.

Returning to the subject-object dynamic, we can see patriarchy's roots in the antiquated relationship between lord and subject. To keep this relationship functioning, patriarchy compartmentalizes women, making it much easier to hyper-sexualize them. As mentioned above, her identity is polarized into one of two archetypes: either the "mistress" or the "mother." Women's worth is held in their ability to bear and care for children yet they are not allowed to express that sexuality inherent to the childbearing process. The false binary inscribes the notion of a woman's "physical purity," essentially objectifying the woman by reducing her substance to the construct of virginity alone. No longer recognized for herself, or for her character, a woman is either "a virgin," or "not a virgin." Consequently her personality is no longer decipherable from her perceived purity, because in lacking virginity, she lacks all worth. She is no longer able to achieve society's ultimate goal of finding a man to

marry, "as a thank offering for her virginity." Realizing "that there is nothing impure in sex—except the mental attitude to it," Loy recognizes this moral code as arbitrary (Loy 155). It can be done away with, because its justification loses all worth when taken out of the oppressive subject-object dynamic. If the subject-object dynamic is rejected, the method for defining women can no longer be virginity alone. A woman's selfhood could not be reduced to the presence or absence of a single quality, such as virginity. She could be powerful—an agent of sex, motherhood, and character, thereby giving life to her entire person.

I want to continue to look at Loy's feminism by presenting Loy's poetry as an inherently personal account of her own attempt to assert agency through sex, motherhood, and character—an attempt to break down the false binary that the patriarchy creates for women of "the mistress & the mother," as explained in her manifesto (Loy 155). In this false binary woman is caught in the middle—shamed for her sexuality yet prized for her childbearing abilities inherent to sex. In poem 1, Loy removes morality from human sexuality by presenting a sexualized satire of traditional love. She employs a character named Pig Cupid to depict sex as amoral, expressing contempt for convention. The poem begins with a series of fragments, the first line reading, "Spawn of fantasies." There is a tension between spawn, something clinical and infesting, and the notion of fantasies, which are something both desired and sentimental. "Spawn" alludes to the idea that the child is the unwanted burden of the mother; a parasite of sorts, given that the child is sustained by the mother but receives all of the intrinsic value. Continuing with the physical, her use of fragments at line 3 enhances the carnality of the poem embodied in Pig Cupid:

Spawn of Fantasies
 Silting the appraisable
 Pig Cupid his rosy snout
 Rooting erotic garbage
 “Once upon a time”
 Pulls a weed white star-topped
 Among wild oats sown in mucous-membrane

I would an eye in a Bengal light
 Eternity in a sky-rocket
 Constellations in an ocean
 Whose rivers run no fresher
 Than a trickle of saliva

These are suspect places

I must live in my lantern
 Trimming subliminal flicker
 Virginal to the bellows
 Of Experience

Coloured glass

Pigs connote filth and base lowliness. Countering this connotation through the use of the name Cupid, she upsets the words' natural associations. The language forces a compromise between their usual associations and the societal notion of ideal love bound up in the name Cupid. This love perceived as perfect and wholly moral is emptied of human decency and flattened to the level of the animal.

In line 4, which contains the metaphor “Rooting erotic garbage,” the word “rooting” takes on multiple meanings. In context of Pig Cupid it serves to mean digging around (as in a trough)—the male sex organ becoming a snout. Looking at the noun form of the word, “root” Loy points to the inherent nature of sexual desire. It is rooted within us. Through this she proposes the possibility that sex and love are not separate from one another, and that this false differentiation is merely a construct. She plays with society's tendency to name the sexual as dirty; but if sex equals love, and sex equals dirty, here love becomes dirty. As she mentions in her manifesto, the virtue of sexual purity is something that must be given up in exchange for a woman's self-respect.

Now let us consider the definitive break in the poem where Loy counters the overtly sexual “mistress” personality, with the nuance of her own embedded sentimentality: contrasting the eroticism of Pig Cupid, Loy inserts herself at line eight as she goes through a number of metaphors explaining love. The first metaphor “Bengal light” is noteworthy, because it refers to flares used for signaling in a maritime setting. Loy plays with the double meaning of the words “I” and “eye,” hinting that she herself becomes an “eye” left to perceive this grand image of love as it burns out before her. Continuing with these rocket and ocean metaphors, Loy presents two impossible images of the uncontainable—“eternity in a sky-rocket” focuses especially on the ephemeral nature of love, as she watches the supposedly eternal explode in a moment before her. She presents these beautiful metaphors only to go on to say, “Whose river runs no fresher / than a trickle of saliva.” Bringing focus to the body with “saliva,” Loy emphasizes the paradoxical nature of love, as not only an inner struggle between philosophies, but between the mind and

the body. In line thirteen she forefronts the inevitable realization that love cannot last, declaring that, “These are suspect places.” In other words, the places in which love is idealized, or taken out of context of the sexual, should be questioned. Animalistic sexual desire and fairy-tale love can only coexist for so long. The word “place” becomes important, because it differentiates one space from another. This division of space mirrors the division between Loy’s identities as “mistress” and “mother.” Both Loy’s definition of her self, and of love paradoxically morph and run together as her politics and sentiments find themselves continually in opposition with one another.

The push and pull to define an identity manifests itself within the poems like a peek into Loy’s own pseudo-neurotic internal dialogue. Her poetry tells the story of a feminist trying to live sexually without shame, but also contains the story of a woman desirous of the same sentimental love that would shame her. This woman is Loy herself. Loy the poet was Loy the controversial speaker, and because of this, we must read her work personally, nearing on the side of the autobiographical. By disclosing herself as the speaker through intimate details that mirror her personal life (see *Becoming Modern* and footnotes in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*) she is able to express a philosophical dichotomy validated as subjectively true, largely because it is Loy’s own lived experience—it is her account of trying to live by an ethic-feminism more easily seen in black and white, when isolated to paper, than when lived out.

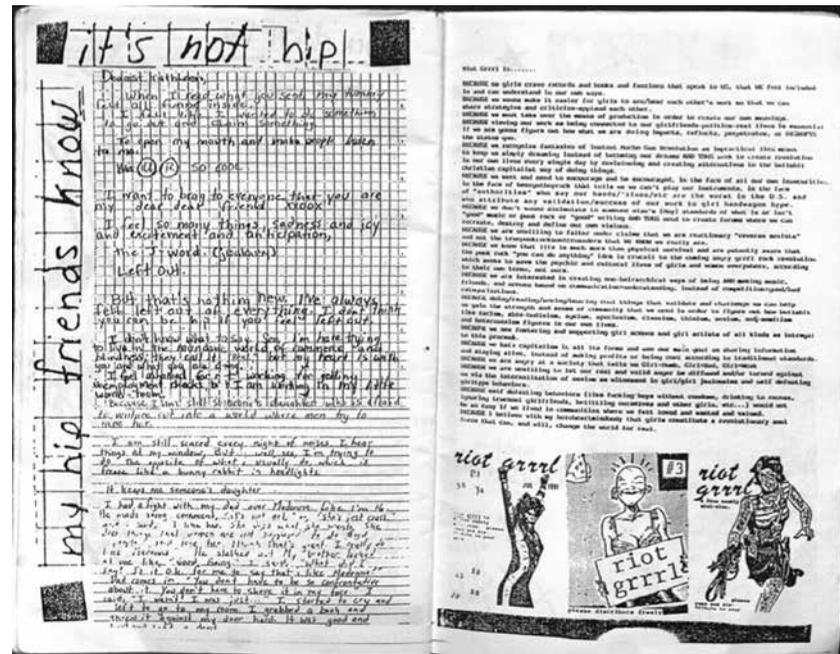
With the idea of Loy’s “mistress and the mother” in mind, I would like to display the relevance of Loy’s argument in the more contemporary context of the 1990’s feminist punk movement Riot Grrl, examining how public stage performance and personal zines allowed these grrrls to embody both identities in their movement,

by recognizing that the personal is political. These grrrls realized that it was not only national politics being run by men, but even within the supposedly radical culture of punk, sexism was an issue that must be addressed. As stated in the Riot Grrrl Manifesto they rejected any system that said “Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak” (Bikini Kill Zine #2). Riot Grrrl’s DIY ethic destroyed the lines that existed between the personal and the political in earlier feminisms. It was abrasive screaming, not knowing how to play an instrument but saying let’s start a band, and teen feminists putting out zines in an isolated farming towns. When engaging personal politics, Mina Loy only went so far as to raise internal consciousness. Riot Grrrl made these complex politics its cause, continually defining and re-defining what it meant to be a woman in a patriarchal society.

Riot Grrrl’s most well known band was Bikini Kill, formed in 1990 in Olympia Washington. I will look at the ways in which inclusion of the personal both strengthened and complicated their politics by looking at their zines, lyrics, and wild stage performance by front woman Kathleen Hanna. Riot Grrrl had no defined rules or leaders; nevertheless Bikini Kill would become an important figurehead. I would like to first frame their music within the context of their zines. In Bikini Kill Zine #2 (1991) the band states that Riot Grrrl matters, “BECAUSE we know that life is much more than physical survival and are patently aware that the punk rock you can do anything idea is crucial to the coming angry grrrl rock revolution which seeks to save the psychic and cultural lives of girls and women everywhere, according to their own terms, not ours” (Bikini Kill). Its sense of collective energy, and validation of each individual’s experience valued and invited young women to live out their philosophies—it was not a feminism isolated to bookshelves.

All you needed to contribute to this community was the willpower to change the status quo, and access to a Xerox machine.

Zines were so important to the movement because Riot Grrrl existed on the belief that it only took one person living defiantly to radically change the world; the focus was action. It was not that one



Bikini Kill Zine spread

person's radical lifestyle would spread like wildfire, but that the action itself, in saying that I will not live according to the status quo, was the first step to creating alternative communities. For example, on the page before the Riot Grrrl manifesto, a grrrl writes, "I feel so many things, sadness and joy and excitement and anticipation, the J-word (jealousy). Left out" (Bikini Kill). These are feelings typical to adolescence, but when printed within the feminist zine they support the fight that says being a woman is somewhat isolating. It was not so much what was being said, but that a very important and ordi-

nary someone was saying it. Simultaneously, personal confessions like this became a way of intertwining the vulnerable (and feminine) with the radically political nature of Riot Grrrl. As Stephen Duncombe says in his book, *Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, creating zines was a way, "to reject definitions given by the dominant society and replace them with one's own" (Duncombe 73). The movement carved out a participatory space for the individual to express life as they saw it. Participation was so important because at some level an individual's choice to live differently is the most radical thing that can come out of a capitalist society. The fact that women were consenting to this lifestyle made it radical, each action becoming a political action in opposition to patriarchal oppression.

To note the difference between personal and public mediums of expression, I'll mention that Loy's radical manifesto and "Songs to Joannes" often overlap in message, but as works of art, they operate in completely different spaces, meaning they were not published in conjunction with one another. Loy never published her manifesto in fear that it would be horribly misunderstood. In comparison, the Riot Grrrl Manifesto is tucked within pages of the zine itself—nested between illegible poems, and confessions about experiences of sexual assault. The political cannot be separated from the personal in Riot Grrrl to an extent beyond the philosophical, because the physicality of both their stage performance and nature of the zines make this impossible. What Loy expressed in words became physically manifested in the action of Riot Grrrl.

Just as the personal became intertwined with the political in zines, Bikini Kill's paradoxical lyrics embed themselves within Kathleen Hanna's stage performance. For a long time Hanna wrote most

of her songs about sexual assault, something deeply personal yet undoubtedly the product of a sexist culture. Picture this: “Bikini Kill had played its first few songs fully clothed, but now, wearing just a skirt and a scalloped black bra, Kathleen turned to face the audience so everyone could see what was written on her stomach: SLUT”



Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill

(Marcus 75). These stage antics forced the audience to connect the two: we were calling victims of sexual assault sluts, but these victims were individuals, and they were not victims of isolated misfortune, they were victims of systematic oppression. Even further, in doing this Hanna was reclaiming the word slut, saying because I like to have sex does not mean I deserve to be assaulted. If we look back to Loy, we can see the common theme of sexual shaming, and both of these women’s attempts to deconstruct the false binary between the mistress and the mother.

Let’s look now to the Bikini Kill song “Alien She.” Here Hanna expresses her duality of identity—the girl who wants to “put the

pretty, pretty lipstick on” and the one society calls, “‘feminist’ ‘dyke’ ‘whore.’” The blurring of the lines occurs when she cannot tell if she is participating or succumbing to typically feminine expression. Does she want to put the lipstick on, or is she pressured to? Even more complicated, does feminism pressure her to suppress her femininity? In the opening lines Hanna sings, “She is me / I am her” repeatedly, confusing the ability to ever separate the two. Isolating any one strict identity becomes impossible. One and the same, she yells, “Siamese twins connected at the cunt” (Hanna). This abrasive metaphor sums up the position of a cisgendered feminist woman in society. She is forced to be two women at once from birth onward. This life path is based, as Loy would agree, in her sex. Consciously choosing to live in line with a feminist philosophy, society makes it impossible to fully realize oneself as both a feminist, and as feminine. Going back to the word “cunt,” let’s look at Hanna’s volatile diction. It is considered the most offensive word in the English language, and in using it Hanna associates female sexuality with ugliness and shame (society’s message to women). They have no choice in their assigned sex, and in making sex both their point of inferiority and point of worth, patriarchy sets up a nearly inescapable dynamic. As with Loy’s character Pig Cupid in poem One, we can draw a direct connection between the functionality of reducing womanhood to sex in her poetry, and in Hanna’s use of the word “cunt” in “Alien She.” “Siamese twins”—the feminist and the typically feminine within Loy and Hanna are at odds, yet part of one another. This inescapable duality is heard in Hanna’s voice when she begins the chorus, “I want to kill her / But I’m afraid it might kill me.” Hanna expresses shame for her internalized sexism, while hesitantly questioning the possibilities of feminism itself. We need

to make a clear distinction when reading this: it is not Hanna questioning the validity of feminism, but questioning the genuineness of her life choices as inherent to her being, rather than as products of her chosen politics.

In context of the mistress and the mother, sentiments expressed in “Songs to Joannes” mirror the indecipherability of identity in “Alien She”. To fully understand this, we must look at one of Loy’s more sentimental poems: in poem 16 Loy the romantic reminisces on a sentimental love that might have been:

XVI

We might have lived together
 In the lights of the Arno
 Or gone apple stealing under the sea
 Or played
 Hide and seek in love and cob-webs
 And a lullaby on a tin-pan

And talked till there were no more tongues
 To talk with
 And never have known any better

Through Loy’s sentimental diction, like her use of the phrase, “We might have...” in line 1, it is inferred that Loy the feminist and Loy the romantic are one and the same. In poem 1 Loy presents a feminist standpoint, then counters it with the sentimentality of the “once upon a time.” In 16 Loy uses the same strategy, only performed backwards. The poem is constructed entirely out of the sentimental,

yet her inconclusive diction expresses an incongruity of identity. By beginning the poem with “We might have...” Loy negates the possibility that these dreams of going “apple stealing under the sea,” and playing “Hide and seek in love and cob-webs” were realized. She wants to go apple stealing with her young lover—to get into harmless trouble. By situating this metaphor in the ocean Loy conveys the sense that this is a separate and impossible world, one to which she does not belong. In the second metaphor Loy presents another innocent depiction of young love, but in using the word “cob-webs” suggests that young love is a notion long past. Self-doubting, Loy still desires these things. As much as Loy the feminist tries to separate herself from the society that has created a false idealization of love, she is a participant in this society as well—part of her identity is rooted within it, and this part of her continues to interject itself within her radical politics.

Loy’s ability to express this dichotomy of identity through her poetry is inherent to the personality of the poetic medium. The ambiguity of poetic language allows for a multi-dimensional interpretation of each word, and consequently a live and experiential reading of each poem. The vitality of poem 16 is made apparent by her use of the conjunctions “or” and “and.” Looking at the words themselves we can see how they are reflective of her internal struggle. She does not use the word “either” with “or”; the “or” “and” combination expresses the nuanced reality that she is not a feminist or a lover, but that she is a feminist and a lover. Let’s look at the last line of poem 16: “And never have known any better.” Loy consciously recognizes her convoluted identity. Yes, it would be easier to not know any better, to be unaware of the power dynamics of society. Given her manifesto, the fact is Loy does know better. Her feminist philosophy

does not negate her personality (her lived experience, her desire to love and be loved). Critical thought is at odds with basic human desire; but this is not the fault of the individual, rather the fault of an oppressive system—here Loy discovers there is no perfect feminism without sacrifice.

In conclusion let us examine the last line of “Alien She”: “And all I really wanted to know / Who was me and who is she / I guess I’ll never know.” Hanna may never understand her identity conclusively, but she was participating. In choosing to write SLUT on her stomach she refused any attempt to remove her politics from her being. Through performance, despite internal conflict, her body stands as a political statement. The binaries Loy described as “the mistress and the mother” come to mind. To break down this false binary Hanna had made her physical self a political spectacle—she sacrificed sentimentality for her politics. Through performance, a philosophy isolated to Loy’s mind and written work became the foundation for Riot Grrrl, only now active as opposed to the static of the bookshelf.

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SLASHING PATRIARCHY:

BEAUVOIR, THE SLASHER FILM, AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

In terms of describing what Simone de Beauvoir calls “feminine destiny” when put in conversation with the horror film, one would be hard pressed to think that any kind of positive revisionist claims could be made about the “slasher film”. Typically low budget and centered around body count instead of complex characters or plot structure, “the slasher was once considered too lowly to be taken seriously, deemed as unimagina-

tive exploitation fare routinely churned out for dumb teenagers,” however, “slashers have since acquired new appreciation, thanks in part to *Scream*’s witty self-commentary and its acknowledgement of a critically informed fan base” (Sue Short 47). The idea that there exists a “critically informed fan base” is sharply contradictory to the notion that slashers are invented for the cheap thrills of “dumb teenagers”, there must be something else going on besides just “tits and a scream” (Clover 143). I argue that this something else has enormous implications for philosophical investigations of gender and psychoanalysis. In this paper, I will be looking at three popular films, Wes Craven’s *Scream* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*, as well as John Carpenter’s *Halloween* as examples of how the slasher narrative offers a unique account of female subjectivity as well as offering my own criticisms of the films.

In order to frame my discussion, I will examine the two most common criticisms of Slasher cinema. The first criticism, espoused by conservative film critics who perceive them in terms of “eroticized violence against predominantly female characters as punishment for sexual activities” takes the slasher film at face value, and condemns its graphic violence as “cultural products of the exploitation of sexual difference” (DeGraffenreid 954). Though the number of female victims certainly outweighs the number of male victims represented in these films, to reduce the slasher to glorified film violence against women neglects the fact that some of the most complex presentations of gender are present as well, namely through what Carol Clover calls “the Final Girl”.

Clover characterizes the Final Girl as “the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased,

cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified” (Clover 35). This is only a cursory definition of who the Final Girl is, however, because her status is not only dependent on her position as “sole survivor” of the killer’s attacks, there is something else which marks her as different from her peers from the very beginning. Even someone who does not watch horror regularly can usually pick out the Final Girl’s identity in the first few moments of the film.

The quality which is most often described as what sets the Final Girl apart from her peers is either an implied androgynous quality, or, most importantly, the fact she is “virginal”. As Short points out “the girl who tends to survive such films is distinguished by her relative virtue may accordingly be seen to endorse a specific morality—rewarding restraint and responsibility” (Short 46). This “restraint” is understood as “abstinence”, with the implication being here is that perhaps the *only* way a person can survive this type of horror film is if they refuse sex altogether. Or, conversely, is gendered in a particularly masculine way. As horror-savvy Randy Meeks enlightens a room of his peers during a pivotal scene in *Scream*, not having sex is the first rule of survival. He says “there are certain rules that one must abide by in order to successfully survive a horror movie. For instance, Number 1: You can never have sex. Big NO NO. Big No No. Sex equals death, ok?” (Craven 1996). This raises questions as to whether or not specifically female characters are entirely understood in terms of their sexuality or is there something else which we can attribute the Final Girl’s capacity for survival? Additionally, is embracing femininity in the slasher dangerous?

I disagree with this interpretation because I do not think that Slasher films are misogynistic in themselves, rather I think this un-

derstanding is highly dependent on how we read gender and horror. First, merely characterizing the Final Girl’s capacity for survival on the basis of her sexual choices reinforces a reductive media in which every female character is understood entirely in her capacity to either “put out” or “save herself” for an idealized relationship. It also affirms that her own erotic life is similarly not hers, only when it is compromised by another she either has the right to defend it or succumb to the Other’s desires. In order to critique this point, I will also illustrate my criticisms of psychoanalysis in tandem with Beauvoir and Hélène Cixous, as Slasher films often contend with psychoanalytic themes to generate horror.

In “The Psychoanalytical Point of View” chapter of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir describes that “sometimes words are taken in their narrowest meanings, the term “phallus” for example, designating very precisely the fleshy growth that is the male sex organ; at other times, infinitely broadened, they take on a symbolic value: the phallus would express all of the virile situation and character as a whole” (Beauvoir 49). Within psychoanalysis, things or events which assume a simple meaning can stand for a whole number of symbols and metaphors which characterize meaning as a set of structures. The reason that the “phallus” carries so much meaning in terms of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory is that he already projects “phallic” meaning and concludes it must be true. What makes this even more problematic for Beauvoir is the fact that he excludes feminine destiny from this model, and similarly constructs “woman” out of a structure that already prioritizes masculine existence.

This is why Beauvoir condemns Freud’s meaning structure “on merely masculine destiny, merely modifying some of its traits” (Beauvoir 50). She articulates that woman’s psychological life is

modeled off of an assumed relationship to man's, consequently her desires are unimportant unless they are understood in possessing or lacking "viriloid" characteristics. As Hélène Cixous and Annette Kuhn note, "what psychoanalysis points to as defining woman is that she lacks lack" meaning because she is not a desiring Subject, and therefore doesn't have to fear loss or "castration", "it's man who will finally other woman, 'set her to rights,' by teaching her that without man she could 'misrecognize'" (Cixous, Kuhn 46). Here, woman is given no space to articulate herself in a way separate from masculine behavior, the tools for understanding herself as such are already taken from her. Consequently, for Cixous and Kuhn, women must take up the means of articulating themselves, lest they be misunderstood as empty vessels waiting for men to project desire onto them. Understanding a woman in terms of how she responds to another's desire, therefore, buys into the faulty logic that women are fundamentally without desire.

Returning to my original point, reading the Final Girl only in terms of her sexual choices is problematic because it buys into sexual difference based on a masculinist model. If she is understood in terms of her masculine characteristics, then we assume she is powerful only because of her likeness to Man. If she abstains from sex, then we assume her virgin status is what ensures her safety as her more sexually assertive friends die one by one. Whether or not this is the intent producing such films (I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that most horror directors probably aren't interested in producing pro-abstinence propaganda), I argue that interpreting the Final Girl in such a way has more to do with culturally inherited meaning than a weak attempt at policing adolescent sexuality. For example, compare a film like *Elm Street* to popular franchise *Twilight*

and think about their respective approaches to sexuality. Freddy Kruger is creepy, manipulative, and watches teenage girls while they sleep. The only difference between him and Edward Cullen is that the audience wants Bella to fall in love with Edward instead of staking him. Similarly, we champion Bella for her decision to stay with Edward, even though their relationship has characteristic signs of abuse, and yet condemn Final Girls as prudes because they are more concerned with saving their own lives than getting laid. Shame on them.

If we look at the slasher film using a different, more positive means of interpretation, the results we find may surprise us. For example, not all final girls are virginal, Sidney Prescott not only loses her virginity during the film, she lives to tell the tale. Nancy of *Elm Street* tries to initiate sex with her boyfriend Glen, and Laurie of *Halloween* agrees to a blind date set up by her friend before being interrupted by the killer. By virtue of the films themselves not following understood patterns tends to invalidate the idea that Slashers are contingent upon the Final Girl's virginity. Although sexual choices may be mediated by external factors, such as "peer pressure" or religious influences, the issue at hand is that by this understanding, women have no control over their bodies or respective sexualities. Therefore, in order to read the "Final Girl" as a Subject or free agent, we need to abandon the notion that she is marked as "different" purely because of her sexual choices.

Second, who is to say that other qualities, such as strength, intelligence, and resourcefulness do not inform the Final Girl's ability to survive? Generally speaking, final girls are usually the first, if not the only ones, to discover the truth of the situation at hand in terms of uncovering the killer's identity or even realizing that there exists

a present danger in the first place. The notion of “unmasking” or “revealing” something about the killer’s existence is also an important theme. The tension in the film leads up to the unmasking of the killer’s identity and a fight to the death, where the Final Girl must emerge, victorious if she wishes for her world to return to normal. I would argue that the Final Girl’s power lies in her perception. The Final Girl is also given the power of insight, she is often the first to find clues that may identify the killer, or at least reveal something about them that can be stopped. Sex, in this narrative, can be constituted as a kind of quasi-“Bad Faith” in which those who fail to recognize the seriousness of the situation are immediately in danger.¹ I argue that the key to the final girl’s survival is Beauvoirian in nature. As Beauvoir writes in “The Independent Woman” chapter of *The Second Sex*, “the curse on the woman vassal is that she is not allowed to do anything”. However, either by choice or simply because of the circumstances, the safety of the entire community rests in the Final Girl’s ability to confront the killer *herself*. More than her friends, she understands the seriousness of the situation, tries to protect her loved ones, and when she discovers she can’t without fighting back, decides to go after the killer herself. Even when contrasted with her male counterparts, she chooses strategy and confrontation as opposed to gendered approaches to the problem. The concept of the “White Knight” is almost parodied as time and time again men fail to protect the Final Girl, instead of working together with her to defeat a common opponent, they assume the masculine role of protector and die in the process.

Beauvoir continues by stating “when she [Woman; for my

¹ Sartrean term, which loosely means carrying out one’s existence through expected norms without question.

purposes, the Final Girl] is productive and active, she regains her transcendence; she affirms herself concretely as subject in her projects; she senses her responsibility relative to the goals she pursues” (Beauvoir 721). In the end, it is up to her to save herself and her friends. For example, it is Laurie alone who faces Michael Myers in the end of *Halloween*, though there are males helping her indirectly, they remain absent until the final scene. Short remarks, “*Halloween* was followed by a variety of films that focus on teens in peril, each providing girls like Laurie who survive by facing the enemy” and any kind of male intervention “noticeably disappearing in order to concentrate on a lone female’s heroism” (Short 52).

As Short writes, “rather than interpret the final girl’s abstinence as puritanical and the deaths of her friends as punitive, there seems to be equal if not greater, scope in perceiving the message progressively: be true to yourself, and act responsibly, or pay the consequences” (Short 46). Teenagers are not killed simply because they are sexually active, they are killed because they they fail to recognize the seriousness of their situation. In contrast to glorifying the idle teen, the slasher weighs resourcefulness, self-reliance, and cunning over sexual attractiveness or social status. Generally Final Girls are the outcasts and brainy girls versus the cheerleaders or other queen bees. They might be interested in sex or relationships, to some degree, but they take their responsibilities seriously. For example, Laurie Strode defends her babysitting charges against Michael Myers to the point of risking her own life, a feat which requires remarkable courage. Of course, feminist critics are quick to point out that these qualities point toward some kind of *a priori* maternal instinct which follows the myth of the “good wife and mother”. This implies that woman’s self sufficiency is only developed for the care and

well-being of others, even unborn Others, as opposed to skills she can employ to protect herself. As long as Woman is posited as the absolute Other, even simple facts of self-defense must be justified as means of serving the Subject, which is a line of thinking I want to undo here.

This idea of being-for-another in terms of Woman as the absolute Other is demonstrated through embodiment in regards to sexuality. Within the Slasher film sexuality in-itself is taken to be dangerous, considering “the Final Girl’s “triumphant” survival is read by some critics as reflecting the conservative sexual politics of a nation then in the throes of an HIV/AIDS and teen pregnancy crisis” (Derry 163). Of course, the consequences associated with STIs and teen pregnancy fall heaviest on teenage girls. Not only are they policed from a young age how to present their bodies in such a way that doesn’t arouse male interest (think about school dress codes), but also most birth control and vaccinations are developed for women as well. There is a unspoken cultural implication that woman must be responsible for her body even if what she ultimately does with it is dictated by society at large. Beauvoir even acknowledges this, stating that “the female is prey to the species, whose interests diverge from her own ends” (Beauvoir 384). Because woman has the capacity for childbirth and her body is oriented as such, “if she does not have absolute confidence in her partner, her eroticism will be paralyzed by caution” (Beauvoir 398). Clover similarly talks about the female body as “open”, or subjective to the supernatural entering her, which is why women often play the role of the “possessed” in horror. This danger is especially heightened in the Slasher because penetration happens through especially brutal means, by a weapon or, such as the case with *Elm Street*, through the subconscious.

As L.J. DeGraffenreid suggests, “psychoanalytic and feminist readers posit that we watch slashers because they act as signifiers of latent teenage sexual anxiety and desire” (DeGraffenreid 954). The psychoanalytic reading often hinges on repressed desires and anxieties surrounding teenage sexuality in the wake of HIV/AIDS, and the feminist reading explores how deployment of this sexuality is highly gendered. Furthermore, the “abstinence-only” education and the repeated dangers of sexual activity gone wrong (pregnancy, STIs) make up the myths which surround the path towards sexual initiation, which, for the teenage girl especially, are incredibly frightening; not only in terms of the perceived risk, but also the mystery shrouding the event itself. Even though one could argue that teenage girls today are somewhat better informed than in Beauvoir’s day about their first sexual encounters, there is still an incredible amount of apprehension associated with loss of virginity. Beauvoir notes, “In any case, however deferential and courteous a man might be, the first penetration is always a rape. While she desires caresses on her lips and breasts and perhaps yearns for a familiar or anticipated orgasm, here is a male sex organ tearing the young girl and introducing itself into regions where it is not invited” (Beauvoir 395). No matter how prepared the girl thinks she is, there is an element of the unexpected in the first sexual encounter which Beauvoir attributes to violence. Unlike in teen dramas where the fear and apprehension surrounding sexuality is suspended or downplayed, it is at the forefront of the Slasher film.

It follows, then that teenage sexuality in the horror film is surrounded by violent imagery or an impending doom which is revealed to the audience yet not made clear to the participating couple. Especially in the case of young women, this marks a con-

crete reality which is not addressed even within family units or sex education classes. Conversely, these images are made explicit in the slasher film. It is no wonder then, that the Final Girl anticipates sex with some hesitation. Unlike her peers who mimic adult behavior without considering the ramifications, the Final Girl is able to grasp her own facticity in a way which allows her to transcend the circumstances pitted against her.

The struggle that takes place between the final girl and the killer can be interpreted as the Woman-as-Subject versus the Monstrous Other which seeks to destroy her through continuous violence, yet always underestimating her capacity to see beyond what is immediately presented. The Final Girl does not want to give up her subjectivity, for she knows it is what keeps her alive through the final moments, she works actively against the killer's advances in order to break free of the pattern of ritualistic violence. Once Sidney Prescott is able to identify her killer(s) and Nancy Thompson confronts Freddy Kreuger on his own terms, the threat is immediately diminished and the tables have turned.

Based on these criticisms of the morality of the slasher film and where that leaves the final girl as far as a heroine, I want to draw attention to how female subjectivity is made possible through the medium of the horror film. To do so, I will present an alternate reading with the idea of a female-centric rite of passage in mind. Short notes, "it is only when stripped of the notion she will be saved that the Final Girl comes into her own, undergoing a transition from passive victim to active aggressor when under attack" (Short 53). In contrast to the popular Hollywood or fairy tale narrative where the man either "saves" or "gets" the girl in the end, the final girl must protect her own life, and potentially that of others. In short, her

situation is that of a becoming. Although, it is worth pointing out that this "becoming" is rendered through extreme violence, which also serves a masculinist model as opposed to a feminine means of transcendence. However, unlike in action films where men impose violence on others in order to serve their own becoming, the Final Girl ultimately acts in self-defense, not only in terms of herself but also her friends and family. The fact that her *situation* (or facticity) is characterized by violence is more at issue here as opposed to the actions she takes.

Returning to the point about the Final Girl's "masculine" demeanor, Clover states, "the Final Girl is boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine--not, in any case, feminine in the way of her friends" and goes on to discuss how even the names of final girls are somewhat masculinized (Clover 40). The argument here, being, that Final Girls are portrayed as androgynous so that male audience members will more easily identify with them. I disagree with this interpretation as well, because it dismisses my earlier claims as well as fails to consider a possibility which I share with Beauvoir. I claim that the Final Girl is relatable not on account of her supposed "masculine" characteristics but because these are positive human qualities which shouldn't be gendered. Since the killer isn't characterized as "fully masculine" either, it doesn't follow that the Final Girl should be criticized on the grounds she is "unfeminine". She may express herself in ways that are traditionally constituted as feminine, but in terms of assuming an active identity (which we have typically come to view as masculine) she is bypassing a mutilative aspect of femininity which seals the woman within immanence. Short refutes "equating assertiveness and narrative agency with masculinity is a common error in film

criticism” and states that even Clover finally “admits” the potentiality which is made possible in terms of gender representation (Short 53).

The bottom line is that the Final Girl changes the way we ought to read Slasher films entirely, and in turn we must be careful of how we ought to read the Final Girl herself. She is neither masculine nor completely unfeminine, neither prudish nor sexualized: she represents an ambiguity which Hollywood is at pains to try and categorize. However, if anything I think one can agree that the trajectory of the Final Girl throughout the Slasher film is is incredibly complex and worthy of scholarly analysis, is not merely byproduct of a culture which glorifies movie violence. If we take a dialectical approach to reading the Slasher film, one can find the struggle between the Self and the Other as well as the internal struggle between the Final Girl herself an alternative way of exploring narrative agency for women.

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KEEPING SEX A SECRET:

GENDER SUBVERSION AND HETERO-NORMATIVITY IN *THE HUNGER GAMES* SERIES

On March 23rd, 2012, thousands of American teenaged girls flocked to the premiere of “*The Hunger Games*,” the first film in a trilogy based off of Suzanne Collins’ novel series by the same name. Many of these fans, having read the books, were eagerly anticipating the onscreen adaptation of their favorite heroine, Katniss Everdeen, who by all first impressions is no less than a postapocalyptic Athena, a combination of femininity and physi-

cal strength that commands both attention and respect. *The Hunger Games*, it would seem, offers a platform from which youth could build a Feminist-inspired social agenda, with equality and political unification located at its center.

But beneath the surface of this novel lies the unaffected patriarchal norm, which Collins’ series is able to masquerade as feminism through the inversion of gender roles. Although she is female, Katniss’ heroism in fact functions as a rejection of feminism, as her power is derived almost exclusively from her own adoption of masculinity. Femininity in the novels is dismissed as feeble, regardless of whether it is attributed to a female or to a malesexed character. Not only this, but the romantic relationships between these characters are restrictively heteronormative, even going so far as to put the fate of the supposedly strong female hero, Katniss, at the mercy of her two potential suitors: Gale and Peeta. *The Hunger Games* denounces femininity for the sake of masculinity through the creation of a female character that still abides by traditional masculinist expectations, and in fact goes so far as to physically destroy those who are the most pure examples of womanhood, the “feminine female.” The “empowered woman” is then required to pay the price of her own femininity in order to achieve any semblance of power, or even to secure her own safety. Although Suzanne Collins appears to emphasize the notion of female equality and authority throughout the *Hunger Games* series, the composition of gender in her characters in fact rejects the validity of this idea in the real world.

Feminism, as it is understood today, does not stand only for the social progress of women, but in fact includes such issues as gender identity and sexual orientation. The nation of Panem, as Collins creates it, is an obvious allegory of the modernday United

States, featuring a highly stratified social hierarchy with an extremely materialistic and outoftouch minority at its head. Equality, though portrayed as a basic value among the general population, is unrealized due to a real fear of confrontation between the lowerclass commonwealth of the 12 districts and the hegemonic elite of the Capitol. Even more subtly, the 12 districts have created a hegemony amongst themselves, with some (namely the first and second districts) earning the favor of the rich and powerful Capitol more than others. Lack of equality exists even on an intradistrict scale, with a gender binary creating a hierarchy of usefulness and relevance as per each character. Katniss' district, for example, generally expects women to assume the household chores and "feminine" occupations (such as nursing) while men act as breadwinners, as was the case for Katniss' own family. Traditional gender roles and the powerful social implications that accompany them resonate through the *Hunger Games* universe just as they resonate through our own, forming a dichotomy of gender which is at the base of feminist issues.

Readers of the *Hunger Games* series should understand that the sex of a character (meaning his or her external sexual aspects) is not as powerful an indicator of worth as his or her gender (or internal manifestation of sexuality). Judith Butler helps us to understand the distinction between these two facets of identity in her book *Subversive Bodily Acts*, in which she writes:

If gender attributes and acts . . . are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured. . . . That gender reality is created through sustained social performance means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true of abiding masculinity or femininity are constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's

performative character and the performative possibilities of proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality (382).

Gender, as it is "performative," is malleable, subject to defy the seeming confines of their fixed sex. For the characters of *The Hunger Games*, this means that some characters' behavior is naturally opposite of the stereotypical generic that would have been expected from someone of their sex.

It is interesting to note, then, that the main symbol of the novels, a creature called the "mockingjay," is similarly afflicted by this type of discontinuity. As explained in the series, the mockingjay is a hybrid between the mockingbird, a natural species, and the fictional, geneticallyengineered "Jabberjay" which had been created as a weapon by the Capitol during the first revolution and set loose into the nation of Panem. Later, mockingjays would be reappropriated by the revolutionaries as a symbol of solidarity. But the use of this symbol lies deeper than the political history of the bird itself, and rather ties into the nature of the characters who partake in the rebellion. In an interview with Rick Margolis of *School Library Journal*, Suzanne Collins states:

Now the thing about the mockingjays is that they were never meant to be created. They were not a part of the Capitol's design. So here's this creature that the Capitol never meant to exist, and through the will of survival, this creature exists. And then it procreated, so there are now mockingjays all over the place.

Collins seems to hint that the rebels are, at their core, a mixture between the contrived and the derived, a group of people that must

maintain balance in the conflict between their gender and their sex. The recognition of these two forces as separate inherently creates both freedom of expression and an internal struggle within each of the characters to satisfy both their sexual and gender roles in their society.

At the forefront of the Rebellion is Katniss, who herself is chosen to embody the “Mockingjay” icon. Her hybridity is perhaps most obvious: femalesexed, but accompanied by a presence within her community and family which causes her to reject the femininity she may never have identified with in the first place. Her role as “provider” for her mother and sister began even before her father’s death, and came into full effect when she alone was left to support her family. *The Hunger Games* opens with a tender portrait of Katniss’ frail mother and delicate sister, both sleeping in their beds while Katniss prepares to hunt and earn money for her family. Through Katniss’ perspective, Collins writes:

My little sister, Prim, curled up on her side, cocooned in my mother’s body, their cheeks pressed together. In sleep, my mother looks younger, still worn but not so beaten-down. Prim’s face is as fresh as a raindrop, as lovely as the primrose for which she was named. My mother was very beautiful once, too. Or so they tell me” (*The Hunger Games* 3)

The soft femininity of Katniss’ family is in harsh contrast to Katniss herself, who feels different and alienated from the peaceful scene laid before her. Katniss is the protector, the only person who can be the breadwinner to the family to her domestic, peaceful family. Because she is distinct from the scene she is observing, Katniss is transformed into the masculine polar opposite to the extreme feminine.

Katniss’ masculinity is only strengthened by her skill with weaponry, which we first experience as readers while she is hunting in the woods just beyond the boundaries of her district. While Katniss’ mother and sister are almost inextricably tethered to the soft, domestic setting of the home they share during the first book, Katniss herself finds herself breaking the law in order to venture into nature and, later, into the public areas of the district itself. Her athleticism combined with her freedom of motion gives her a masculine appearance which is further echoed by the fact that these actions are all in fulfillment of her father’s role which she adopts after his passing.

Katniss’ aversion to the feminine is yet solidified during the scene of the “reaping”, in which two children from every District is chosen to participate, and generally die, in the *Hunger Games* competition. In preparation for this ceremony, Katniss’ mother puts both of her daughters in dresses and braids their hair (*The Hunger Games* 15). Once Katniss’ feminine transformation is complete, she is told by Primrose, “You look beautiful,” to which Katniss replies, “And nothing like myself” (15). Very early on in the series, Katniss outwardly expresses her distaste for the feminine and her preference for allowing her gender to remain ambiguous. Archetypically, Katniss becomes the hero of the book through her almost twodimensional identity as the “warrior.” In the article “King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Archetypes of the Mature Masculine” Eivind Skjellum writes, “The warrior is not concerned about his own comfort and security in pursuit of his goal, as his training teaches him to live with death as his constant companion.” Although Katniss suffers both physical and emotional hardships (including several deaths of family members and close friends), she does not respond catatonically as her

mother did at the death of her father. Rather, she accepts the deaths and considers them motives for revenge. She adopts this highly masculine image of strength, bravery, and honor unto which women are rarely attributed.

Peeta Mellark is Katniss' greatest foil, serving as the feminine-gendered, malesexed other half to the *Hunger Games* team of District 12. But rather than become empowered through his inversion as Katniss is, Peeta finds his gendered self to be his greatest weakness. His "schoolgirl" stereotypical vulnerability (having been too shy to admit his feelings for Katniss, despite having known her for most of his life) and his consistent victimization by way of his abusive mother creates him in the meek image readers generally associate with the female. Peeta lacks both the athleticism and the warrior spirit that is typically associated with men, struggling through the preparatory tests of the *Hunger Games* with the exception of those that require aesthetic skill which he hones through his family trade, baking. Additionally, he is given the unlikely archetypical position of "damsel in distress", relying on Katniss to rescue him, first from the *Hunger Games* and later from the Capitol where he is tortured and held prisoner.

The latter of these situations transforms Peeta into an even more distinctly feminine stereotype. After he is rescued from the Capitol, the tortures which he had experienced renders him mentally and emotionally unstable. His hysterics secure his derogatory feminine position; he becomes emotionally unpredictable. The heartbreak that he experiences upon discovering that Katniss does not reciprocate his romantic feelings for her in the second novel of the series, *Catching Fire*, turns into resentment, rage, and paranoia toward her after he is freed from the Capitol. Acting against the

masculine stereotype, Peeta is emotive rather than physical, and maintains his hopelessromantic attitude until the end of the trilogy. The result of these inversions, therefore, does not serve the purpose of female empowerment. While the sexually female character (Katniss) is highly authoritative and strong in the novels, she is only so through the rejection of her feminine gender. Likewise, Peeta's highly masculine physique, which is described as broad and athletic, is reduced to a meaningless and misguided representation of the empathetic, "soft" feminine; in fact, his femininity is such a disparaging marker that it causes him to lose the respect of both Katniss and the reader. Because Peeta's feminine traits prevent him from being self-sustained in war and in warlike competition, he is devalued. Katniss' masculine traits, however, are what inspire respect in the public of the world of Panem, and similarly among readers.

During the course of the series, Collins introduces a limited cast of three female characters which can represent the pure feminine, those whose genders are matched to their sex: Katniss' mother, her sister Primrose, and the young *Hunger Games* contestant from District 6, Rue. It is interesting to note that these are the least developed of Collins' main characters, especially in comparison to the malesexed supporting characters: Gale and Peeta. The reader's understanding of the women of *The Hunger Games* series is limited to a few basic descriptions, generally physical: Rue's "darker skin," Primrose's blond hair, Katniss' mother's weak and aging body (*The Hunger Games*). Collins in fact never goes even so far as to give Katniss' mother a name, and her absence is felt more than her presence in the novels. Women, with the exception of Katniss, take a backseat to the main stage of the novel, participating in the revolution in non-violent ways.

In *The Hunger Games*, as in real life, femininity is often derived from a role of compassion and nurturing. Occupationally, Katniss' mother fulfills this stereotype with work as a "healer," something which Primrose would grow up to emulate during the series. Rue is also a highly empathetic character, a trait which shows through her choice to make an alliance with Katniss. Their connection is the first sign of rebellious humanity in the games, as both Katniss and Rue refuse to allow themselves to be treated as "pieces in the game." When Rue is killed during the course of the *Hunger Games*, Katniss gives her a funeral of sorts, covering her body in flowers and singing to her. The innocent empathy of the *Hunger Games* women, something that is, for a moment, even displayed by Katniss is an indicator of both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. Opposite to the figures of the purely feminine are those of the pure masculine, embodied in *The Hunger Games* in Gale Hawthorne. Gale, who is Katniss' closest friend within her home district, displays his masculinity in ways that are very similar to those that Katniss invokes: he is a hunter, a provider and protector of his family. He is athletic and skilled with weaponry and survival tactics. Like Katniss, he too embodies the "warrior" archetype. The two characters parallel each other almost throughout the entire book, with the key difference being that Gale is male. As a man, Gale is afforded a position of power in the rebellion which has a similar, if not greater, level of political involvement than that which Katniss holds once she is named the "Mockingjay." Katniss, in fact, is no more than a human symbol, whereas Gale is a productive and valuable member of the movement, given information that is otherwise considered classified and treated with respect by the other members of the military.

Gale's position then in turn renders him as an embodiment of the patriarchal force against which the whole object of feminism is compelled. Unlike Katniss' mother, Primrose, and Rue, Gale is a welldeveloped character complete with a last name, a backstory, and an emotional (as well as political) presence. He is given an important role within the Rebellion forces, helping to create military strategy and lead the army to victory. As his personality is so like that of Katniss, it must be assumed that the position of power and involvement that he is given is due only to his male gender which, in combination with his male sex, puts him at an extreme social advantage. Gale's masculinity poses a threat to those who are of lesser "worth" under the patriarchal system which Collins has put in place within the novels.

All of these tensions culminate in a single action: the death of Primrose. While Rue's death is certainly an omen of the eventuality, the collapse of the somewhat stable socially parallel "matriarchy" (or perhaps the illusion of it) occurs when Primrose is killed in a shower of bombs rained down on the innocent by the forces of the rebellion (of which Gale was an instrumental part). Primrose becomes the martyr of the feminine, a symbol for the power that masculinity still holds over the seemingly equal world of the future. It seems that Collins is exposing the necessity of gender inversion in order for a woman to effectively assert power, and advocating the destruction of the feminine in its entirety.

The destruction is cemented by Collins' latent use of heteronormativity to create romantic boundaries and connections between her characters. Collins' book promotes this social expectation through the relationships between characters, allowing only hetero-

sexual romantic relationships. This includes Katniss, who for a time seems to consider both Peeta and Gale to be her suitors. Katniss herself describes romance as something that is born from the “opposites attract” mentality, saying, “That what I need to survive is not Gale’s fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that” (*Mockingjay* 388). Gale is immediately discounted as a viable lover because of his and Katniss’ inherent similarities.

Heteronormativity is also seen in background characters, including Katniss’ own family members. Katniss’ mother and father are very polarized sexually; as neither is very welldeveloped, they are the most basic and uncomplicated representation of gendered romantic relationships in the novels. Her mother, who is alive during the time which the novels are set, is intensely feminine, as I have described above. Her husband, we can only assume, was then incredibly masculine, an inkling we can prove more through those attributes which he passed on to Katniss than in the characterization of he himself.

But Collins even goes so far as to extinguish romantic relationships between those who are gendered similarly, even if they are of the opposite sex. While Katniss attempts to stop her romantic involvement with Peeta early on in their relationship, his persistence eventually causes her to succumb, and the novel concludes with a description of the children that they would go on to have together. Her lack of interest in a romantic relationship with Peeta is treated

as invalid, and her female sex requires her to assume the submissive position, revoking any inclination of strength and rebellion she had once had. This relationship must persist because Katniss is femalesexed and gendered male, aspects which Peeta perfectly compliments as a character who is sexually male and gendered female. Katniss and Gale’s relationship is deemed fruitless because of the homosexual undertones which are involved in its making, in that both characters are gendered male. Here, Collins again abandons feminism, showing that women, regardless of their status in society, must eventually settle for the role which their sex provides for them. Although Katniss is characterized as independent, the fact of her female sex forces her back into a position of submission to patriarchal social norms.

The implications of the *Hunger Games* series stretches beyond the scope of the book, advancing the very same political agenda in the real world that it outwardly claims to deconstruct. Over the course of the novel, readers watch the decomposition, rather than the reinforcement, of the strong feminine, and they are left with a shallow finale which insists that the efforts of the people to create an equal society will always eventually be deemed ineffective by the unrelenting patriarchy, one which is incorporated so deeply so as to remain secret and unaddressed. *The Hunger Games* does not demonstrate the empowered woman, but rather the blatant absence of the empowered feminine from feminism. In her place, there is a necessary removal of the feminine aspects of a person’s self in order to promote their place of power in society. Collins’ books make the argument that it is only through the internalization of the masculine that women can seek to have equality alongside men. But perhaps

it means not to debunk the powerful feminine, but to reinforce the awareness of such an issue. Through exhibition of the secret “weak feminine” and exposure of the disguised masculine, the two forces can be chipped away at until the “empowered feminine” becomes more than a myth, and is instead a force to be reckoned with in our society.

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